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THE DAUGHTER
OF AN
EGYPTIAN KING.



THE DAUGHTER
OF AN
EGYPTIAN KING.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF

GEORGE ^{sc}EBERS

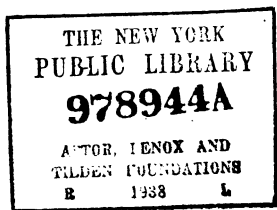
BY

HENRY REED.

*Aut prodesse volunt, aut delectare poetae,
Aut simul et jucunda et idonea dicere vita.*

L. C.

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PREFACE.

GEORGE EBERS, the author of "Eine Ägyptische Königstochter," of which the following is a translation, is Director of the Museum at Jena, and holds a high rank among the antiquarian scholars of Germany. He is a disciple of Lepsius, whose expedition to Egypt he accompanied, and to this great scholar is indebted for most valuable counsel and criticism in regard both to the main plan of the novel and to its most minute details.

The original work contains a series of notes establishing the authenticity of the incidents and descriptions, but as they have no connection with the story it has been deemed advisable to omit them from the translation.

THE TRANSLATOR.



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THE
DAUGHTER OF AN EGYPTIAN KING.

CHAPTER I.

THE HOUSE OF RHODOPE.

THE Nile had overflowed its banks, and spread itself far and wide over what were, but a little while before, rich grain-fields and blooming gardens,—an endless stretch of water as far as the eye could reach. The cities, guarded by their levees, with their gigantic temples and palaces, and the village roofs crowned with tall palms and acacias, were alone reflected in the river below. The boughs of the sycamore and plantain dipped into the stream, while the silver poplars seemed as if trying to lift their upward-springing branches high above its reach. The full moon was pouring its soft light from beyond the Libyan Hills, that faded far away into the western horizon; to the north lay, scarcely to be seen, the Mediterranean; on the water's surface floated the blue and the white lotos-flowers, and through the night-air, heavy with the scent of jessamine and acacia, flew bats of many kinds; in the tree-tops slept the wild doves; pelicans, storks, and cranes crouched among the rushes on the river-bank; the pelicans, sleeping with their great beaks under their wings, did not stir; but the cranes, startled by the stroke of the oars, or the boatman's song, put out their long, thin necks, half in fear, half in curiosity. Not a breeze stirred, and the image of the moon, floating like a silver shield upon the water, showed that the Nile, which had taken the cataracts in a wild leap and had dashed past the giant temples of Upper Egypt in head-

long flight, here, where it reached out to the sea with its hundred arms, had foregone its furious speed and given itself over to more gentle movement.

Upon this moonlight night, in the year 528 before the birth of the Saviour, a boat passed up the almost unfelt current of the Canopean mouth of the Nile. An Egyptian sat upon the high roof of the stern deck, and managed thence the long steering-pole; in another part of the boat were the rowers, singing at their oars; while two men lay upon cushions placed on the deck under a canopy. Even by the light of the moon one could tell their Hellenic faces. The elder, an unusually large and muscular man of some sixty years, whose long gray hair fell upon his thick-set neck in unheeded disorder, looked gloomily down into the stream, while his companion, younger by twenty years, slender and graceful in his proportions, now gazed up into the sky, now hailed the steersman, now gathered his beautiful purple chlamys into new folds, or played with his scented brown locks or his curly beard. The boat had started two hours before from Naucratis, the only town in Egypt then open to the Greeks; the gloomy, gray-haired man had never in the whole journey spoken a word, and the younger one was quite content to leave him to his thoughts. As the boat neared the shore, the restless passenger arose and said to his fellow-traveller,—

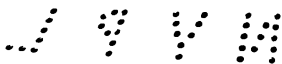
“We shall soon be at our goal, Aristomachus. Yonder, to the left, the friendly house in the garden of palms that rises over the inundated flats, is the home of my friend Rhodope. Her husband, Charaxus, who is now dead, built it for her, and all her friends, even the king himself, vie with each other in adorning it, year by year, with new beauties,—quite needless labor: the fairest ornament of the house, had they poured into it the treasures of the universe, will ever be its own noble mistress.”

The old man raised himself, gave a passing look at the building, and said, curtly,—

“What a paragon you make of this Rhodope! Since when have Athenians taken to praising old women?”

Phanes smiled, and answered, in a self-satisfied tone,—

“I think I know something of men, and more of women; and let me assure you that I know nothing in all Egypt



grander than this gray-haired widow. When you have seen her and her gentle granddaughter, and have listened to your favorite songs chanted by a well-trained chorus of the women slaves, you will thank me for having brought you here."

"Still," answered the Spartan, in his earnest voice, "if I did not hope to meet Phryxus of Delphi, I would never have followed you."

"You will find him, of course; but, at any rate, the singing will please you and charm away your melancholy."

Aristomachus shook his head.

"The music of your country may bring joy to you, light-hearted Athenian, but to me, though they were the songs of Alcmenes, they will be as if heard in a dream; my longing will be the more excited, not laid at rest."

"Think you, then," said Phanes, "I do not pine for my own loved Athens, the play-grounds of my youth, and the busy life of the market-place? The bread of exile will never be made sweet to my lips even by the intercourse of such friends as these. When the songs of Greece, in all their wondrous beauty, sound in my ears, like the walls of Thebes to the music of Amphion's lyre, my home rises before me. I see its fields of olive and fig-trees, its cool, green rivers, and the blue sea, the white, gleaming cities, and the distant snow-peaks of my own country,—and tears of sadness and of joy flow; when the notes have ceased, I have to force myself to think that I still sojourn in Egypt, this strange, unchanging, torrid land, which, thanks to the gods, I shall soon leave. But, Aristomachus, would you pass by the oasis in the desert because you must soon again press on, thirsty and weary, through the burning sands? Will you let one hour of bliss go by because dark days are waiting for you beyond? But here we are at our journey's end. Come, man, put on a brighter face; it is sacrilege to bring such gloomy looks into the temple of the graces."

The boat at this moment reached the river-wall of the garden, and with a light spring the Athenian leaped from the boat, while his companion followed him with a slow, steady step. The wooden leg of Aristomachus kept pace

so well with the Athenian's strides that one would have thought he had brought it with him into the world. The garden of Rhodope, with its flowers, its perfumes, and its myriads of insects, seemed like a part of the land of fairies. Acanthus, yellow mimosas, hedges of snowball-bushes, jessamines and lilacs, roses and laburnums crowded each other; huge palms, acacias, and balsam-trees towered over the bushes; great bats with delicate wings flitted through the air, and on the water were the distant sounds of song and laughter. An Egyptian had laid out this garden, and the builders of the Pyramids were from all time the most renowned landscape-gardeners of the world; they understood the art of placing the flower-beds, of arranging by rule the groups of trees and bushes, of giving to the canals, fountains, and arbors their places, of making for the walks their artistically-fashioned hedges, and of dotting here and there ponds for gold- and silver-fish. Phanes remained standing at the garden-gate, while he looked and listened carefully; then he shook his head, and said,—

"I don't understand this at all. I hear no voices and see no lights; all the boats are gone; and yet the flag of welcome waves on its motley staff by the obelisks on each side the door. Rhodope must be away; can they have forgotten——"

He had not finished, when he was interrupted by a deep voice, saying,—

"It is the captain of the body-guard himself."

"A pleasant evening to you, Cnacias!" said Phanes, as he greeted the old slave who was approaching. "How does it happen that this garden is as silent as an Egyptian tomb, though I see the welcoming pennon there? Since when does that white streamer flutter in vain for the guests?"

"Since when, indeed?" answered the old servant, with a smile. "As long as the Fates kindly spare my mistress the flag is sure to summon as many guests as the house can hold. The evening was so lovely that she determined to go out upon the river with all her friends. Two hours ago, at sunset, they left, and the dinner is waiting for them on the table. They will not be away much longer

You must not be impatient, Phanes; come with me now into the house. Rhodope would never forgive me if I did not compel such valued guests to stay. And you, O stranger," said he, addressing the Spartan, "I beg most heartily to remain; for, as the friend of her friend, you will be doubly welcome to my mistress."

The two Greeks, following the servant, descended into an arbor. Aristomachus gazed at the moonlit scene around him, and said,—

"Tell me, Phanes, what good fortune has this Rhodope, once a slave and concubine, to thank, that she lives as a queen and is able to entertain her friends like a princess?"

"I have been long expecting this question," answered the Athenian. "I am very glad that I am able to tell you of this woman's past before you enter her house. During the journey I did not want to force it upon you. This primeval river has a strange power of compelling one to silence and meditation. When I, like you, sailed upon it for the first time, even my light tongue was dumb."

"I thank you," answered the Spartan. "When I first saw the priest Epimenides, with his sevenscore years and ten, at Onossus, in Crete, a wonderful awe of his age and sanctity fell upon me; how much older, how much holier this hoary stream! 'Egypt!' Who can overcome its strange influence! But still, I beg you, tell me of Rhodope."

"As a little child," began Phanes, "Rhodope was playing on the shore of Thrace, with her companions, when she was stolen by Phœnician sailors and taken to Samos, where Iadmon, a nobleman, bought her. The girl grew daily in beauty, grace, and cleverness, and all who knew her admired and loved her. Æsop, who was then also a slave in the service of Iadmon, especially delighted in the brightness and loveliness of the child. He taught her in everything, and did for her all that in Athens a pedagogue does for the boys. The good teacher found a quick and docile pupil, and the little slave spoke and sang and played, in a short time, better and more gracefully than the sons of Iadmon, who were

educated with the greatest care. In her fourteenth year, Rhodope was so accomplished and so beautiful that the jealous spouse of Iadmon would no longer suffer her to be in the house, and the Samian, with a heavy heart, had to sell his darling to a certain Xanthus. At that time the impoverished aristocracy were still in power. Had Polycrates been at the helm, Xanthus would have had no need of searching for a purchaser; these tyrants fill their treasure-chambers as the magpies do their nests. He had, therefore, to take his jewel to Naucratis, and here he won great sums by the charms of his slave. It was now that Rhodope lived three years of the deepest humiliation, of which she never thinks without a shudder. When at length the fame of her beauty had spread through all Hellas, and while strangers came on her account from distant lands to Naucratis, it happened that the people of Lesbos drove out their nobles, and chose the wise Pittacus for their ruler. The most illustrious families had to leave Lesbos and flee to Sicily, Magna Græcia, and Egypt.

“Alcæus, the poet, the greatest of his time, and Charaxus, the brother of that Sappho whose odes it was our Solon’s last wish to learn, came hither to Naucratis, which flourished as the centre of the commerce of Egypt with the outer world.

“Charaxus saw Rhodope, and fell so passionately in love with her that he paid a large sum to the haggling, hard-dealing Xanthus, who wished to go back to his own home. Sappho mocked her brother in biting verses for this. But Alcæus approved of what Charaxus had done, and celebrated Rhodope in glowing songs. Charaxus, who had hitherto been lost in the herd of foreigners in Naucratis, suddenly became, through Rhodope, well known and sought after. For her sake, strangers crowded his house and overwhelmed him with presents. The Pharaoh Hophra, who had heard much of her beauty and wit, sent for her to come to Memphis, and would have bought her of Charaxus; but the latter had long since, in secret, given her her freedom, and loved her too well to be able to part from her, while, on the other hand, Rhodope was greatly attached to the handsome Les-

bian and remained with him gladly, in spite of the glittering offers that were made her from all sides. At last Charaxus took this wonderful woman to be his own proper wife, and lived with her and their little daughter Cleis in Naucratis, till Pittacus called the exiles home. Then he betook himself, with his wife, to Lesbos. On the way there he fell ill, and died soon after his arrival at Mitylene. Sappho, who had ridiculed her brother for his low marriage, was quickly changed to a most enthusiastic admirer of the beautiful widow, to whom, in rivalry with her friend Alcæus, she sang impassioned odes. After the death of Sappho, Rhodope went back with her daughter to Naucratis, and was received here like a returning goddess. Amasis, the present king, had in the mean time made himself master of the throne of the Pharaohs, and was defending it with the help of the soldiers, of whose caste he was. Since his predecessor Hophra, through his partiality for the Greeks, and his intercourse with the foreigners, who were hated by all the Egyptians, had hastened his fall, and had driven the priests and soldiers to open mutiny, every one cherished the hope that Amasis would exclude, as was done in the old time, all aliens from the land, dismiss the Hellenic soldiers, and hearken to the priests' commands and not to the counsels of the Greeks. You can see how the cunning Egyptians deceived themselves in their choice of king, and fell from Scylla into Charybdis. If Hophra was a friend of the Greeks, we might call Amasis our lover. The Egyptians, especially the priests and soldiers, breathed fire and flame, and would have throttled us with all the pleasure in life. About these last the king did not trouble himself, for he knew perfectly what they and what we were to him; but for the priests he had to have some consideration, for, besides their having unbounded influence over the people, the king himself clung, more than he would confess to us, to the worn-out religion which in this extraordinary country has stood unchanged for thousands of years and is on that account doubly sacred to the faithful. These priests make the life of Amasis a burden to him, and persecute and injure us whenever they get the means and opportunity. I had been long since a dead man, if the king

had not thrown his protecting arm around me. But whither am I wandering? Rhodope was, as I said, received with open arms at Naucratis, and Amasis, when he came to know her, loaded her with marks of his favor. Her daughter Cleis, who never took part in the evening assemblies in her house, and who was brought up more strictly, if possible, than the other maidens of Naucratis, married Glaucus, a rich Phocian merchant, of noble birth, who had valiantly helped to defend his city against the Persians; she followed him to the newly-founded Marseilles, on the Gallic coast. The young people fell victims to the climate of the place, after one daughter, Sappho, had been born to them. Rhodope took the long journey to the west herself, and brought home the little orphan, whom she most carefully educated in her own house. She forbids her granddaughter, even though now grown up, the society of men, for she feels the stains of her own youth so keenly that she holds Sappho more excluded from all contact with our sex than even Egyptian propriety demands; though this is, to be sure, no privation to the maiden. To my friend herself, society is as necessary as water to a fish, or air to a bird. All foreigners visit her, and he who has once tasted her hospitality will never forego it, when the flag announces a reception evening, and his time permits him. Every Greek, from whatever place he may come, whatever may be his rank or importance, visits her, for here he will be told how he may cope with the hatred of the priests, and how best the king is to be approached. Here one always finds the freshest news from home, and from all the outside world; here the persecuted find an inviolable asylum, for the king has given his friend a letter of protection against the annoyances of the police. In this house one hears the song and speech of Greece; here, how Hellas can be freed from the growing tyranny, is the one subject of consideration; in a word, this house is the central point of all the Grecian interests in Egypt, and is of great political significance as the meeting-place of a local brotherhood devoted to Hellenic religion and commerce. In a few minutes you will see this wonderful old woman, and perhaps, if we remain

alone, even Sappho; but you must understand we should owe this to our worth, and not to mere good fortune. Ah! there they are going into the house,—do you not hear the slave-women singing? Now they enter. Give them time to sit down, and then follow me, and, at parting, I will ask you whether you repent having come with me, and whether Rhodope is not more like a queen than a manumitted slave.”

The house of Rhodope was in the Grecian style. The exterior of the long one-story building would, according to our views, have been thought very simple, while within it united Egyptian color with Hellenic symmetry. The wide principal door opened into the entrance-hall of the house, on whose left side a large dining-hall looked upon the river,—while opposite to this was the kitchen, a room found only among the rich Greeks, the poorer people cooking their food at the hearth in the antechamber. The room for receiving visitors was at the farther opening of the entrance-hall, and in the form of a square, surrounded by a gallery, into which several rooms opened. In the midst of this apartment, the rendezvous of the men, there burned, upon an altar-shaped brazier of rich Egina metal, the great fire of the house. During the day this room was lighted by means of openings in the roof, through which, at the same time, the smoke from the fire made its escape. Opposite to the entrance-hall ran a passage terminated by a heavy door leading to the women's apartment, ornamented with pillars on three sides only; in this the women were accustomed to stay, unless when sitting at their spinning and weaving in the rooms near the door opening into the yard. Between these and the rooms which extend along the women's apartment to the right and left, and which were used as guest-chambers, lay the sleeping-rooms, which were also used to hold the treasures of the house. The walls of the men's hall were painted with a reddish-brown, against which the marble statues, gifts of an artist of Chios, stood out in strong relief. Heavy carpets from Sardis covered the floor. Following the pillars lay cushions covered with tiger-skins; while round the carved brazier were curiously-shaped Egyptian chairs and finely

cut tables of *Thya* wood, upon which lay all sorts of musical instruments, flutes, lyres, etc. On the wall hung countless lamps, of various forms, filled with the oil of *kyphi*,—one representing a dolphin belching fire, another a strange, winged creature, whose jaws cast forth flames, all mingling their light with the blaze on the hearth.

In this hall stood several men of different appearance and various costumes. A Syrian from Tyre, in a rose-colored cloak, was having an animated conversation with a man whose sharply-cut features and curly black hair showed the Israelite. The latter had come from his home to Egypt to buy for Zerubbabel, King of Judah, Egyptian horses and wagons, at that time greatly in repute. Near these stood three Greeks from Asia Minor, in the costly, flowing garments of Miletus, talking earnestly with Phryxus, the simply-clad ambassador of Delphi, who had come to collect moneys for the temple of Apollo. The old Pythian sanctuary, ten years before, had been destroyed by fire; and now a new and more glorious one was to be built. The Milesians, disciples of Anaximander and Anaximenes, had come to the Nile to study astronomy and Egyptian philosophy at Heliopolis. The third was a rich merchant and ship-owner, named Theopompus, who had settled at Naucratis. Rhodope herself was talking with two Greeks from Samos, the celebrated architect, metal-caster, sculptor, and goldsmith, Theodorus, and the writer in iambics, Ibycus, from Rhegium. They had left the court of Polycrates a few weeks before, to see Egypt, and to take presents from their master to the king. Close by the fire, stretched out at length on the motley fur covering of a double chair, lay a corpulent man with a forcible, intelligent face, Philoinus from Sybaris. He was playing with his hair, which was scented and inwoven with gold, and with the golden chains that hung from his neck and fell on his saffron tunic which reached to his feet. Rhodope had for each a friendly word, though now she was speaking exclusively to the renowned Samians. She talked with them of art and poetry. The eyes of the Thracian woman glowed with the fire of youth, her tall figure was straight and full, her gray hair curled in waves round her well-shaped

head, and was twisted at the back into a net of delicate gold thread. Her fair forehead was crowned with a sparkling diamond. The noble Hellenic face was pale but beautiful, and without a wrinkle, in spite of her advanced age; even the little mouth, the full lips, the white teeth, the eyes, at once soft and bright, the classic nose and brow of this woman would have become a maiden. Every one supposed Rhodope to be much younger than she really was, though she never assumed youth, which she did not possess. All her movements were those of matronly dignity; and her grace was not that of youth, which tries to please, but that of age, which shows forth its graciousness, demanding and receiving respect.

At this moment our two travellers appeared in the hall. The eyes of all turned towards them, and when Phanes entered, leading his friend by the hand, he was welcomed most heartily.

One of the Milesians exclaimed, "I have been trying all this while to find out what was missing. Now it is perfectly clear that without Phanes there is no mirth!"

Philoinus the Sybarite then cried, in his deep voice, without moving from his comfortable place, "Mirth is a good thing, and if you bring it with you, you are welcome, Athenian!"

"To me," said Rhodope, going to meet her new guests, "you are most welcome if you are happy, and no less welcome if oppressed with trouble, for I have no greater joy than to smooth the lines of care from the forehead of a friend. You too, O Spartan, I call a friend, for every one is that who is dear to those I care for."

Aristomachus bowed in silence; and the Athenian said, turning half to Rhodope, half to the Sybarite, "Well, then, good people, I can please you both. You, Rhodope, may have a good opportunity of comforting your friend, for I must soon leave you and your friendly house behind me. And you, friend Sybarite, may make as merry as you please with my gayety, for I am about to see Greece again, and to put behind me—though with some regret—this land of gilded mouse-traps."

"You are leaving us?" "You have been dismissed?" "When do you intend to go?" was demanded from all sides.

"Patience, friends, patience!" cried Phanes. "I have a long story to tell you, and will keep it till dinner; and be it said, in passing, Rhodope, that my sorrow at leaving you is only surpassed by my hunger."

"An appetite is a good thing," enunciated the Sybarite, "when a good meal is in prospect."

"Do not be apprehensive, Philoinus," answered Rhodope: "I have ordered the cook to do his best, and have told to him that the greatest epicure from the most luxurious city in the world, that a Sybarite, that Philoinus, will pass critical judgment upon all his dishes. So tell them, Cnacias, to have dinner. Be content, impatient gentlemen. You have taken away all my interest in it, disagreeable Phanes, with your sorrowful news."

The Athenian bowed; the Sybarite, however, philosophized:—"Content is a good thing, if one has the means of gratifying all one's wishes, and I thank you, Rhodope, for the honor you have paid my incomparable city. What says Anacreon?"

"Man of sorrow, drown thy thinking!
Say, can the tear we lend to thought
In life's account avail us aught?
Can we discern, with all our lore,
The path we've yet to journey o'er?
* * * * *

To hearts that court the phantom, care,
Let him retire and shroud him there,
While we exhaust the nectar'd bowl
And swell the choral song of soul!"

"Come, Ibycus, have I quoted your friend and boon-companion at the table of Polycrates correctly? I tell you, if Anacreon can make better verses than I, your humble servant understands life quite as well. In all his poems he has no praise of eating,—as if eating were not more important than love and play, although these occupations, I mean love and play, are dear enough to me. Without eating, a man will die; the others he can do without, even though it does go hard."

The Sybarite burst out laughing at his own cleverness;

* Moore's Anacreon.

and the Spartan, while the others continued talking with each other, turned to Phryxus, the Delphian, and, drawing him into a corner, forgetful for the moment of his own studied self-control, asked him, in great excitement, if he had brought with him the long-sought answer of the oracle. The earnest face of the Delphian brightened as he felt in the folds of his chiton, and brought out thence a small roll of parchment, upon which several lines were written. The hands of the strong, brave Spartan trembled as he snatched at the roll. He gazed at it as if he would pierce it through with his eyes. Then, recollecting himself, he shook his head dejectedly, and said,—

“We Spartans learn other arts than reading and writing. If you can, read what the Pythian god has said.”

Phryxus hastily read over the writing, and answered, “Rejoice: Apollo promises you a happy return home. Hear what the priestess announces:—

“What time the host of the mighty the snow-clad mountains descendeth,
Down to the low-lying meadows washed by the life-giving river,
Then will the tarrying boat bring thee to the fields that thou lovest,
Where the wandering feet will rest henceforward forever;
What time the host of the mighty the snow-clad mountains descendeth,
Then will the five who give judgment bestow the boon they deny thee.”

With fixed attention the Spartan listened to these words; for the second time he had the oracle read to him—then he repeated it to himself from memory, and, thanking Phryxus, took the roll. The Delphian joined the general conversation; and the Spartan kept murmuring the lines unceasingly to himself, that he might not forget them, trying all the while to puzzle out the enigma.

CHAPTER II.

THE BANQUET.

THE folding doors of the dining-hall opened. On each side of the entrance stood a fair, light-haired boy, with wreaths of myrtle in his hands. A long, low, highly-polished table was in the middle of the room, and along its sides scarlet cushions invited the guests to lie down. On the table were rich pyramids of flowers, and great pieces of roast meat; glasses and bowls full of dates, figs, and pomegranates. Melons and grapes were placed close by little silver hives full of honey; delicate cheese from Sicily lay on burnished copper dishes; and in the centre of all stood a piece of plate resembling an altar, which was encircled with wreaths of myrtle and roses, and from whose projections rose clouds of incense. At the farther end of the table stood the mixing-bowl, a splendid work of Egina art, whose twisted handles represented two giants, crouching under the weight of the bowl which they supported. This cratera, like the altar, was covered with flowers, and around each cup also there was twined a garland of roses and myrtle. Rose-leaves were scattered over the whole room, on whose polished walls of white stucco hung many lamps. Scarcely had the guests lain down when the boys entered, and proceeded to wreath their heads and shoulders with ivy and myrtle, and to wash their feet in silver basins. When the carver had taken the first roast from the table to divide it, the Sybarite immediately called upon the boys, though he already reeked with all the odors of Araby, to cover him completely with flowers; but as soon as the first dish, a tunny with mustard sauce, was put on the table, he forgot everything else, and devoted himself exclusively to the enjoyment of the lordly viands. Rhodope sat on a chair at the head of the table near the cratera, directing both the servants and the conversation.

With a certain pride she looked round upon her happy guests, and seemed to occupy herself with each exclusively, now inquiring of the Delphian the success of his collections, now asking the Sybarite if the achievements of her cook pleased him, now listening to Ibycus, who was telling how Phrynichus of Athens had brought the Icarian religious tragedies of Thespis into civic life, and was representing entire histories on the stage with chorus, strophe, and antistrophe. Then she turned to the Spartan, telling him that he was the only one to whom she had to make excuse for her dinner, not on account of its simplicity, but its richness. When he came again, she said, she would order her slave Cnacias, who boasted, as an escaped Spartan helot, that he could cook a black pudding, to prepare a genuine Lacedæmonian dinner. At these words the Sybarite shuddered.

When all had finished, they again washed their hands, then the dishes were removed, the floor swept, and wine and water poured into the cratera.

At length Rhodope, after she had satisfied herself that all was properly arranged, turned to Phanes, who was arguing with the Milesians, and said,—

“Noble friend, we have controlled our impatience so long that it is now your duty to tell us what evil chance threatens to carry you from Egypt and our society. With that fickleness which the gods bestow upon all you Ionians as a precious gift at your birth, you can easily part with us and this country; but we shall think of you long and sadly, for I know no greater loss than that of an old and true friend. Some of us have lived too long on the Nile not to have acquired a little of the fixed, unchanging disposition of the Egyptians. You may smile, but I know that, though you have long pined for Greece, you will not leave us without some regret. I am right? I knew I was not mistaken. Tell us now why you leave Egypt, that we may consider whether it is not possible to have your order of banishment cancelled, and still keep you to ourselves.”

Phanes, smiling bitterly, answered, “I thank you, Rhodope, for your flattering words, and your kindness in mourning over my exile and in trying to prevent it.

A hundred new faces will soon make you forget me ; for, even if you have lived here so long, you are still a thorough Greek, and should be thankful to the gods for it too. I also am a friend to fidelity, but just as much an enemy to folly ; and is there one among you all who thinks it wise to mourn over the inevitable ? Egyptian fidelity is no virtue in my eyes, but mere madness. They who preserve their dead for thousands of years, and will give up their last crust sooner than a bone of their great-grandfather, are not faithful, but foolish. Can it give me any pleasure to see the friends whom I love sorrowful ? You should not keep me in memory by months of daily-repeated lamentations, as the Egyptians do when a friend leaves them. If in truth you think now and then of him who is far away,—for I never expect to see Egypt again as long as I live,—let it be with laughter ; not saying, ‘ Ah, why has Phanes left us ? ’ but, ‘ We will be merry, as Phanes would be were he with us. ’ Do as Simonides commanded when he sang,—

“ Let us wiser be, I pray,
 Nor here lamenting stay ;
 Give to him past away
 One single tear.
 Death naught from us should borrow ;
 Life comes and goes to-morrow,
 And, without this useless sorrow,
 Is sad and drear. ’

“ If one must not mourn over the dead, still less must we grieve over a departing friend ; for the one is forever lost ; to the other we only say, ‘ Till we meet again. ’ ”

Now the Sybarite, who had been long waxing impatient, could no longer keep silence, and in a woe-begone voice he exclaimed,—

“ Begin your story, you ill-conditioned man. I cannot drink a drop while you keep talking about death. I am cold all over, and I shall be ill if I hear about—I mean, if I hear that we shall not live forever. ”

Amid the laughter of the whole company, Phanes began his story :—

“ I live at Sais, as you know, in the new fortress ; but at Memphis, as captain of the body-guard which must

always accompany the king in his travels, I had apartments in the left wing of the ancient palace allotted me. Since the time of Psamtic I. the kings reside at Sais, and so the interior of the other palace has fallen into neglect. My lodging, pleasantly situated on the lowest floor, was beautifully furnished, and in every way quite to my fancy, if, on my entrance into it, a terrible plague had not made itself felt. During the day, when I was seldom at home, my rooms left me nothing to wish for; but at night sleep was not to be thought of, from the noise of the rats and mice under the floors and the furniture. The first night an impudent mouse ran right across my face. I could think of no remedy in this distress, till finally an Egyptian soldier sold me two fine white cats, who in a few weeks rid me of my persecutors. You all know that by one of the admirable laws of this wonderful people, whose culture and wisdom my friends from Miletus can never sufficiently praise, cats are declared holy. Divine honors are paid to these fortunate quadrupeds, as well as to so many other beasts, and their murder is punished as severely as a man's."

Rhodope, who had been smiling, became more serious when she perceived that Phanes' banishment was connected with his contempt of these sacred animals. She knew how many sacrifices, how many human lives, this superstition had cost. Only a short time before King Amasis himself had been unsuccessful in trying to save an unlucky Samian, who had killed a cat, from the vengeance of the angry people.

"All was well," continued the captain, "when we left Memphis, two years ago. I had trusted the pair of cats to the care of one of the Egyptian servants of the palace, and I knew that these foes of rats and mice would keep my rooms in good order in the future. I even began to pay a certain respect to my friendly protectors from the mice. Last year Amasis was sick before the court had gone to Memphis, and so we had to stay at Sais. Finally, six weeks ago, we started for the city of the Pyramids. I entered my old quarters, and found there not the glimpse of a mouse-tail; but instead of rats there swarmed creatures of another kind, that were

not any more agreeable to me than their predecessors. The pair of cats had multiplied twelvefold in my two years' absence. I tried to drive out the horrid brood of kittens of every age and color, but it was useless; and I had to have my sleep interrupted by horrible miauling choruses, shrieks of feline war, and tomcat songs, which lasted till day.

"Every year, at the time of the feast of Bubastis, it is permitted to all to bring their superfluous mouse-catchers into the temple of the cat-headed goddess Pacht, where they are taken care of, and, as I believe, quietly gotten rid of when they increase too much. These priests are such rascals! Alas! the great pilgrimage to this sanctuary did not fall within the time of our sojourn at the Pyramids, and I could no longer stand the horde of persecutors. I resolved, therefore, when two feline matrons presented me with a dozen healthy offspring, at least to get rid of these. My old slave Mys undertook the charge of killing the beasts, hiding them in a sack, and throwing them into the Nile. This murder was necessary, for without it the miaulings of the kittens would have betrayed to the servants the contents of the bag.

"When it was dark, poor Mys betook himself, with his dangerous burden, through the Hathor grove to the Nile; but the Egyptian slave who was accustomed to feed the cats noticed that the litter of the two animals had been removed, and at once saw through our plan. My slave went quietly through the great Sphinx alley leading to the temple of Ptah, holding the bag concealed under his mantle. He noticed in the sacred grove that he was followed. He paid little attention to it, however, and was continuing his way unconcernedly, when he perceived that the men who were following him had stopped at the temple, and were talking to the priests. He had scarcely reached the shore when he heard men calling, and saw a crowd running quickly after him, while a stone whistled past his head. Mys saw the danger which threatened him: summoning all his strength, he ran to the Nile, threw the sack into the river, and stood with beating heart, but without, as he

thought, any evidence of his guilt, on the bank of the stream.

"A few minutes later he was surrounded by a hundred of the ministers of the temple. The high-priest of Ptah, Ptahotep, my ancient enemy, had not disdained to follow the bailiffs in person. Several of them, among others the treacherous palace-servant, went out into the river, and found, to our destruction, the bag hanging with its twelve corpses uninjured in the papyrus reeds on the shore. Before the eyes of the high-priest, a crowd of temple-servants, and at least a thousand of the people of Memphis who had hastened hither, the cotton shroud was opened. When they saw its unhallowed contents, there arose a cry of horror and revenge so loud and shrill that it reached the palace itself. The furious crowd threw themselves in wild frenzy on my poor slave, flung him on the ground, trod upon him, and would soon have killed him, had not the all-powerful high-priest bid them stop, and commanded them, with a view to my destruction as the contriver of this wickedness, to put the miserably disfigured miscreant into confinement.

"Half an hour later I myself was under arrest. My old Mys took all the responsibility of the crime on his own head, until the high-priest, by whipping, forced him to the confession that I had commanded him to kill the cats, and that he, as a faithful servant, obeyed my orders. The high court, against whose decisions the king himself is powerless, is composed of priests from Memphis, Heliopolis, and Thebes. As you may suppose, they condemned to death, without any hesitation, poor Mys, as well as my insignificant self; the slave, for two capital offences,—first, the murder of the sacred animals, second, the twelvefold desecration of the holy river by their dead bodies; me, for contriving this four-and-twenty-fold capital offence, as their jargon expressed it.

"Mys was executed the same day. May the earth lie lightly upon him! In my memory he will live, not as my slave, but as my friend. In sight of his body the sentence of death was read to me, and I made my prepa-

ration to start upon the long journey to Hades, when the king ordered a reprieve. I was then taken back to prison. An Arcadian captain, who was one of my sentinels, told me that the Greek officers of the body-guard, and a large number of the soldiers, altogether more than four thousand men, had threatened to take their departure if mercy was not shown their leader.

"After dark I was led to the king, who received me graciously. He confirmed what the taxiarch had told me, and expressed his sorrow at having to lose a favorite officer. So far as I am concerned, I willingly confess that I am not angry with Amasis. Yes, I even pity the mighty king. You should have heard him complain how he could do nothing as he wished, that everywhere, even in his most private affairs, he was hampered and endangered by the priests and their influence. If it depended upon himself, he would willingly forgive me the offence of breaking a law which I could not understand, and which I regarded, even though mistakenly, as superstitious. But, on account of the priests, he could not let me go unpunished: banishment from Egypt was the mildest penalty he could assign me. 'You do not know,' he added, 'what concessions I shall have to make them in order to obtain this favor for you. The high court is independent of even me, the king.'

"Then I was dismissed, after I had sworn to leave Memphis that day, and Egypt, at the latest, in three weeks. At the gates of the palace I met Psantic, the prince-royal, who had persecuted me on account of some shameful doings of his, of which, however, I will say nothing. You know what I refer to, Rhodope. I said good-by to him; but he turned his back upon me, saying, 'You have escaped this time, Athenian, but you have not eluded my vengeance. I will find you out, wherever you may go.' 'Do not be too sure of that,' I answered him, and, having put my possessions on board a vessel, came hither to Naucratis, whither good fortune had brought my old host, Aristomachus of Sparta, who, as former commander of the troops at Cyprus, will probably be named as my successor. I would be glad to see so excellent a man in my place, if I did not fear that, in com-

parison with his more useful services, mine may seem less than they really were."

Here he was interrupted by Aristomachus. "Enough of this praise, friend Phanes: Spartan tongues are unskilled, but with deeds I will make the answer that you require."

Rhodope looked approvingly at them both, and said, "I see, alas! from your story, my poor Phanes, that your stay in this land cannot last much longer. I will not reproach you for your levity; but let it show you to what dangers you expose yourself merely to accomplish a trivial purpose."

And then, addressing the Spartan, she prayed that in his new office he would be true to his fellow-countrymen, telling him, with such words of fire, what Greece would be if Greeks could forget their selfish interests and unite in a common Hellenic cause, that Aristomachus, grasping her hand, cried, earnestly,—

"By Jupiter Lacedæmonius, not a hair of their heads shall be touched. You, Rhodope, are worthy to be a Spartan."

"And an Athenian," said Phanes.

"An Ionian," cried the Milesians.

"A noble-born daughter of Samos," said the sculptor.

"I am more than all this," exclaimed Rhodope, in her enthusiasm. "I am more,—much more! I am a Greek."

All were moved, even the Syrian and the Jew, saving only Philoinus, who added, with his mouth so full that he could hardly be understood, "You are worthy to be a Sybarite, for your roast meat is the best I have tasted since I left Italy, and your Anthyllian wine is as delicious as that of Vesuvius and Chios."

All laughed except the Spartan, who turned upon the epicure a look of indignant contempt.

"A pleasant greeting to you," said a deep, unknown voice, suddenly through the open window.

"A pleasant greeting to *you*," answered the chorus of banqueters, asking and guessing who this late comer might be. But they had not long to wait for the stranger, for, before the Sybarite had time to test another mouthful of wine with his tongue, there was standing

close by Rhodope a tall, thin man, of some sixty years, with a long, finely-cut, intellectual face, Callias, son of Phænippus of Athens.

The tardy guest, who was looking round with clear, piercing eyes, was one of the richest of the Athenian exiles. He had twice bought from the state the possessions of Pisistratus, and had twice lost them when the tyrant returned. Exchanging friendly greetings with all the guests, he said,—

“If you do not value my arrival highly, then all I have to say is, there is no gratitude left in the world.”

“We have long been looking for you,” exclaimed one of the Milesians. “You are the first person who can tell us of the result of the Olympian games.”

“We could not ask for a better messenger,” added Rhodope, “than a former victor.”

“Sit down,” cried Phanes, impatiently, “and tell us briefly and concisely what you know.”

“At once, fellow-countryman,” answered he. “It is some time since I left Olympia, and took passage at Cenchræ in the best Samian fifty-oared ship that was ever built. I do not wonder that no Greek arrived before me at Naucratis, for we encountered terrific storms, which we never could have come through in safety, if these Samian vessels, with their thick bellies, their prows like ibis-beaks, and their sterns like the tail of a fish, were not so excellently built and manned. The others, who were returning home, may have been driven out of their course, the gods know where, but we were able to shelter ourselves in Samos, and after ten days to set sail again. When we at last reached the mouth of the Nile this morning, I hastened on board my boat, and was carried by Boreas, who, at the end of my journey, wished to show that he still felt some regard for old Callias, so quickly that a few minutes ago I caught sight of the most hospitable of houses. I saw the flag waving and the open windows lighted, and I debated with myself whether I should come in, or not. I could not resist your attractions, Rhodope, and I should have burst with my untold news if I had not disembarked to tell you, over a plate of beef and a cup of wine, things you little dream of.”

Callias laid himself comfortably upon a cushion, handing over to Rhodope, before he announced his intelligence, a gold bracelet in the shape of a snake, which he had bought in Samos, at the workshop of that Theodorus who was at the table with him. "This I bring you," said he, turning to Rhodope; "but for your friend Phanes I have something better. Who, do you suppose, won the prize in the four-horse race?"

"An Athenian?" asked Phanes, with a glowing face; for the Olympian victory belonged to the whole people of whom the conqueror was a citizen; and the Olympic olive-branch was the highest honor and the greatest good fortune which could fall to the lot of an Hellenic man, or, indeed, a whole Grecian race.

"Well guessed, Phanes! An Athenian has won the prize of all prizes; and, what is more, that Athenian is your cousin, Cimon, son of Cypselas, and the brother of the Miltiades who, nine Olympiads ago, obtained the same honor. He conquered this year, for the second time, with the very same horses that won him the victory at the last festival. Truly the Philaides are throwing into the shade the renown of the sons of Alcmaeon. It is enough to fill you with pride, Phanes, and with delight at the fame of your family. Yes, we should be proud and joyful, and you above all, for after the judges had unanimously awarded the prize to Cimon he made the herald declare Pisistratus the owner of the steed, and consequently victor. Your family, by the proclamation of Pisistratus, can now go back to Athens; and therefore the hour of your return home has come."

The glow of joy faded away, at these words, from the captain's cheek, and the satisfied pride of his expression changed into wrath as he exclaimed,—

"I should rejoice, foolish Callias? I should rather weep when I think that a son of Ajax could so shamefully lay his well-earned glory at the feet of the despot. No, I swear by Athene, by father Zeus, and Apollo, that I will starve in exile before I go one step towards home while the tyrant holds my country in slavery. I am free, free as the winds of heaven, released from the service of Amasis; and I would rather be a peasant's slave in an

alien land than the chief in honor among the minions of Pisistratus. To us, the nobly-born, to us belongs the rule in Athens. Though Cimon, when he laid his crown at the footstool of the king, in so doing, recognized the tyranny and received the helot's brand, I care not for the oppressor's favor. An exile will I be till my country is free and lords and people ordain their own rules, proclaim their own laws. Never will I do homage to the usurper, though all the sons of Philæus and Alcæon, yea, even thine own race, the rich Daduchi, should kneel to Pisistratus on the footsteps of his throne."

When Phanes ceased, old Callias looked proudly around, as if to say, "See, friends, such are the children of my glorious home;" and then he spoke:—

"As hateful to me as to you, my friend, is this autocrat. Yet I see only too well that while Pisistratus lives tyranny lives. His allies, Lygdamis of Naxos and Polycrates of Samos, are very powerful; but the most dangerous thing of all for our freedom is the prudence and moderation of Pisistratus himself. With fear I saw, in my last sojourn in Greece, that the populace of Athens love him as a father. In spite of his power, he concedes to the commons the laws of Solon; he adorns the city with works of art; the new temple of Zeus, which is being built, Theodorus, by Callæschrus, Antistates, and Porinus, of beautiful marble, will excel all other Hellenic buildings. He invites artists and poets of every kind to Athens; he orders the songs of Homer to be written down, and commissions Onomacritus to collect and record the sayings of Musæus. He is laying out new streets, and has appointed new holidays. Commerce flourishes under his sceptre, and the people, in spite of the taxes which are laid upon them, are most prosperous. And what are the people? A common herd, who are like moths flying about a candle, and who, when they have burnt their wings, still flutter around the flame that destroys them. Let the torch of Pisistratus be once extinguished, and I swear to you, Phanes, the fickle crowd will fly towards the new light, the restored nobles, as they had done before to the tyrant.

"But, friends, I have still more news to tell you. In

the chariot race, then, Cimon conquered, and immediately offered his olive-branch to Pisistratus. Never have I seen such horses as his; never have I seen the games more magnificent. All Hellas sent messengers. Every city of Greek origin was represented, even such distant towns as Rhoda, Tartessus, and Sinope. Sybaris sent an ambassador in glittering splendor; the Spartans, men plainly clad, but with the beauty of Achilles and the size of Hercules; the Athenians were conspicuous for their graceful movements and supple limbs. The Crotonians were represented by Milo, the strongest of the sons of men. The Samian and Milesian revellers rivalled in splendor and luxury those of Corinth and Mitylene. All the Hellenic youth was there met together; and in the places for the spectators, near men of every age, condition, and nation, sat many lovely maidens, who had come from Sparta to stimulate, by their applause, the emulation of the strife.

“The fair was held on the other side of the Alpheus: there you could see merchants of all lands,—Hellenes, Carhedonians, Lydians, Phrygians, haggling Phœnicians from Palestina, driving a profitable trade, with their goods displayed for sale in booths and tents. How shall I describe the crowd, tossed to and fro in great waves, the sounding choruses, the smoking hecatombs, the motley dresses, the costly wagons and horses, the discord of a hundred dialects, the cries of joy when old friends met after long absence, the glittering show of the ambassadors, the restless motion of the traders and spectators, the eager anxiety for the result of the contest, the magnificent spectacle of the rows of seats crowded with lookers-on, the interminable applause when the victory was decided, the solemn bestowal of the palm, which a boy from Elis, both of whose parents must be yet alive, had cut with a golden knife from the sacred olive-tree in the Altis,—the sacred grove,—from the very tree that Hercules had planted many centuries before! How shall I picture to you the endless shouts of triumph, which sounded through the stadium like pealing thunder, when Milo the Crotonian carried his image, carved in brass by Dameas, upon his shoulders through the whole course

without bending the knee till he put it in the Altis! The weight of its metal would have crushed an ox, but Milo carried it as easily as a Laconian mother her child.

“The most beautiful wreaths, after that of Cimon’s, were given to two Spartan brothers, Lysander and Maro, sons of Aristomachus. Maro conquered in the foot-race, but Lysander, amid the plaudits of the spectators, stood up in the wrestling ring against Milo, the invincible champion of Pisa, and of the Pythian and Isthmian games. Milo was taller and stronger than the Spartan, whose form was like that of Apollo, and whose extreme youth showed that he had just outgrown the *pædanomus*. In their naked beauty, shining with the yellow oil, the youth and the man stood opposite each other like a lion and a panther preparing for the strife. Before the first onset the young Lysander raised his hands in adjuration to the gods, exclaiming, ‘For my father, my honor, and the glory of Sparta,’—the Crotonian all the while looking complacently down at the boy.

“Then began the contest: for a long time neither could grasp the other; with almost irresistible force Milo would seize his adversary, who glided like a snake out of the vice-like grip of the athlete. Long was the effort for a close, while the vast assembly gazed on, silent and breathless; no sound was heard but the panting of the wrestlers, and the song of the birds in the Altis. At last the youth, by the finest management that I ever saw, succeeded in winding himself around his opponent. Long did Milo put forth, in vain, all his strength to loose the boy’s strong arms. The sweat of the giant struggle poured upon the sand of the arena. More intense grew the excitement of the lookers-on, deeper became the silence, fewer and more far between the cries of encouragement, and louder the groaning of the combatants. Suddenly, all his powers failed the boy. A thousand inciting voices called to him—once more he gathered himself up with a superhuman effort, and tried to throw the Crotonian, but Milo had seen the momentary weakness of his foe, and held him in a fierce embrace, till from the beautiful lips of the Spartan there gushed a stream of clear red blood, and he sunk from the exhausted arms of

the giant, lifeless to the ground. Democedes, the greatest physician of our times,—you Samians must have met him at the court of Polycrates,—hurried to the spot; but no art could help that hero: he was dead. Milo had to give up the wreath,—all Hellas rang with the praises of the young Laconian, and I would rather be dead as Lysander, the son of Aristomachus, than live as Callias, who grows old in inglorious idleness, in an alien land. The whole of Greece, represented by its noblest men, carried the youth to his grave, and his statue is to stand in the Altis, near those of Milo of Crotonia, and Praxidamus of Egina.

“At length the heralds announced the decree of the judges: ‘To Sparta is due, for the sake of him who is dead, the victor’s wreath; death, not Milo, conquered the noble Lysander. For he who has come out unconquered from two hours of struggle with the strongest of the Greeks, well deserves the branch of olive.’”

Callias was silent for a moment; in his eager description of the events nearest of all to Grecian hearts, he had no thought save only of the picture of the struggling wrestlers, that his fancy painted in the empty air. When he looked up he saw the gray-haired man with the wooden leg, whom he had noticed without recognizing, hiding his face with his hands, and shedding hot tears. On one side of him stood Rhodope, and on the other Phanes; all the other guests gazed upon the Spartan as if he had been the hero of the Athenian’s story. The quick-witted Callias saw immediately that the old man must stand in very close relation to the Olympian victor, but when he heard that he was Aristomachus, the father of the renowned Spartan brothers, whose fair forms floated before his eyes like visions from another world, then he looked with envious admiration upon the sobbing old man, and tears, that he did not try to hold back, filled his keen eyes.

For a long interval all the guests remained still, respecting the sorrow of the aged Lacedæmonian. At length Joshua, the Israelite, ended the silence by saying in broken Greek,—

“Weep with all your heart, O Spartan. I know what it is to lose a son. I buried, eleven years ago, a fair boy

in a strange land, by the waters of Babylon, where my nation lay in captivity. Had the child but lived one single year longer he would have died in his own home and been buried in the sepulchre of his fathers: but Cyrus the Persian,—Jehovah bless him in his generations!—freed us one year too late, and I mourn the child of my heart with twofold grief because his grave was made in the land of the enemy of my people. God be merciful to me! Had I lost such a son as thine, who had grown into a glorious man, that would have been the sorrow of sorrows.”

The Spartan took away his hands from before his stern face, and answered, smiling through his tears,—

“You are wrong, Phœnician; I weep for joy, not pain. I would gladly lose my other son, had he died Lysander’s death.”

The Jew, shocked at these words, that seemed to him wicked and unnatural, shook his head in disapproval. The Greeks, however, overwhelmed the fortunate old man with their congratulations.

Aristomachus seemed to have been made many years younger by his increase of joy. “Your house, my friend,” he said to Rhodope, “has indeed been blest for me since I entered it; for, see, this is the second gift of the gods that I have received.”

“And what was the first?” she asked.

“A favorable answer from the oracle.”

“You forget the third,” said Phanes: “‘To-day the gods have made Rhodope known to you.’ But what as to the oracle?”

“Can I tell it to our friends?” asked Phryxus.

Aristomachus nodded assent, and Phryxus read, for the second time, the answer of Apollo:

“What time the host of the mighty the snow-clad mountains descendeth,
Down to the low-lying meadows washed by the life-giving river,
Then will the tarrying boat bring *thee* to the fields that thou lovest,
Where the wandering feet will rest henceforward forever;
What time the host of the mighty the snow-clad mountains descendeth,
Then will the five who give judgment bestow the boon they deny thee.”

Scarcely had Phryxus uttered the last word than Calias, springing up with an exultant cry, exclaimed,—

"The fourth gift, the fourth gift from the gods, you have received from me in this house. Know, then, that I reserved my strangest intelligence till the last. The Persians are coming to Egypt."

Not one of the guests except the Sybarite remained in his place, and Callias could scarcely protect himself from their host of questions. "Gently, good friends, gently; let me tell my story in order, or I shall never be through with it. A great embassy from Cambyses, the present ruler of the all-powerful Persians,—and not an army, Phanes,—is on its way hither; in a few days they will arrive,—members of the king's own family, including old Cræsus of Lydia himself among them. No one knows the object of their mission; it is supposed that King Cambyses will offer an alliance to Amasis. Some pretend that the great king is suing for the daughter of the Pharaoh."

"An alliance?" asked Phanes, with an impatient shrug of his shoulders. "The Persians rule already half the world. All the great powers of Asia have submitted themselves to their sceptre; only the Egyptians and the Hellenic mother-country have been spared by the conqueror."

"You forget the golden Indies and the wandering tribes of Asia; you forget, besides, that an empire, conglomerated from seventy nations of various languages and customs, bears in it the seeds of war, and therefore has to protect itself from foreign contests, lest, when the chief part of the army is absent, single provinces seize the coveted opportunity for rebellion. Ask the Milesians whether they would remain quiet should they hear that the power of their conqueror had been checked in a single fight."

Theopompus, the merchant of Miletus, said, laughing, "If the Persians are unsuccessful in one campaign, they will have a hundred others upon their hands; and my country will not be the last to rise against the enfeebled oppressor."

"Let the ambassadors have what purposes they please," continued Callias, "I reiterate my information that they will be here at the latest in three days."

“And so, fortunate Aristomachus, will your oracle be fulfilled,” said Rhodope. “‘The host of the mighty from the snow-clad mountains’ can be no other than the Persians. When they come to the banks of the Nile, the five Ephori will change their mind, and summon you, the sire of the Olympian victors, back to your home. Fill the glasses afresh, Cnacias; we will drink this last cup to the manes of the glorious Lysander; then I must dismiss you, for it is long past midnight, and our joy has reached its climax. True hospitality speeds the guests when their mirth is full. The pleasant, unclouded recollection will bring you here soon again, if you have none of the satiety that follows bliss to mar it for you.”

All the guests applauded Rhodope; and Ibycus, praising the joyous excitement of the evening, called her a true disciple of Pythagoras. All rose, but Philoinus, who had drunk deeply, left his comfortable seat reluctantly, supporting himself as he went on the shoulders of his slaves, maundering all the while about a breach of hospitality. When Rhodope offered him her hand, he exclaimed in drunken folly,—

“By Hercules, you turn us out of door, as if we were dunning creditors. I am not accustomed, as long as I can stand, to leave the table, nor to be dismissed like a parasite.”

“Don’t you understand, you insatiable Sybarite?” interposed Rhodope, smilingly, excusing herself; but he, in his besotted stupidity, misunderstood her, and laughed sneeringly, as he staggered toward the door.

“‘Insatiable Sybarite,’ sayest thou? Well, take this for thy answer: ‘Shameless slave!’ Oh, we know what thou wert in thy youth! Farewell, slave of Iadmon and Xanthus! farewell, freed-woman of Charaxus!”

He had scarcely finished, when the Spartan threw himself upon him, and, having struck him a blow with his fist, carried him senseless to the boat that was waiting at the foot of the garden.

CHAPTER III.

RHODOPE AND HER FRIEND.

LIKE a tempest of hail upon a field of grain, had the vituperations of the drunkard fallen upon the mirth of the guests. Rhodope herself stood pale and trembling in the deserted banqueting-hall. Instead of the clear light of the lamps, there broke a wan glimmer, which served to show the remnants of the feast and the empty couches. Through the open door came the cool air of morning, making her shiver from head to foot.

As she stood looking with tearless eyes upon the desolate room so lately filled with merriment and joy, her soul seemed to her like this abandoned spot. Busied with her dreary thoughts, she did not move till the old slave-woman entered to light her to her chamber. She sat in silence while her servant undressed her; then noiselessly she lifted the curtain that separated a second bedroom from her own. In the middle of the latter stood a bed of maple-wood, in which, under blue curtains, upon a mattress of wool covered with white sheets, lay a gentle, lovely creature,—Sappho, the granddaughter of Rhodope. One arm, on which rested her head, was hidden in her rich dark hair, the other clasped a little green amulet that hung from her neck. Her long eyelashes quivered slightly, and over her cheeks passed a momentary flush. She seemed an image of innocence, or the figure of a gentle Peace smiling in its dreams, as she lay there sleeping the sleep that the gods give to the young.

The old woman drew near, noiselessly treading upon the thick carpet. With unutterable tenderness, she looked down upon the smiling, childish face; silently kneeling before the bed, and pressing her face upon the soft coverlet, so that the hand of the maiden just touched her hair, she wept long, as though she would wash away in

tears the abasement and misery of her soul. At last she rose, and, after kissing the forehead of the sleeping girl and raising her hand toward heaven in prayer for her, she went back to her own room as silently as she had come.

Standing by her couch she found the old slave, who was still waiting for her. "What keeps you so late, Melitta?" she asked kindly. "Go to bed; long watching is not good for one so old; you know I do not want you any longer. Good-night, and do not come to-morrow till I send for you. I may be able to sleep a little, and I shall be glad if the morning brings me some rest."

The slave hesitated, as if she had something to say and yet was afraid to say it.

"You want something of me?" asked Rhodope.

The old woman still hesitated.

"Speak; say what you want to say, and be not long about it."

"I saw you weeping," answered the slave. "You seemed troubled or ill; can I not watch with you? Will you not tell me what ails you? If you trust it to me, peace may so perhaps come back to your heart."

"No, I cannot tell it," answered Rhodope, adding bitterly, "It is only that there is no god who can blot out one's past, and that sorrow and shame are one. Good-night. Leave me, Melitta."

At the mid-day following, the same boat that had brought the Athenian and the Spartan the night before, lay at the foot of the garden of Rhodope. The sun shone out so clear and warm and bright from the cloudless blue of the Egyptian sky, the air was so pure and fresh, the locusts hummed so joyfully, the boatmen on the water sang so loud and merrily, the river's bank was so bright with its motley flags and its crowds of people, the palms and acacias seemed so blooming with their rich foliage, the whole land appeared so filled with the treasures of the generous gods, that one passing by would have said that from these happy fields all wretchedness was banished, and that this was the chosen home of mirth and joy. Who, seeing this land of Egypt, would guess that the bright southern country, with its fair, overhanging

sky, brought forth enslaved and miserable men? Who would guess that in the flower-embosomed hospitable home of the fortunate Rhodope, there was a wretched and sorrowing heart? and what acquaintance of the courted Thracian would have thought that this heart was hers? Pale, but beautiful and gracious as ever, she sat, talking with Phanes, in a grove near a fresh-springing well. Rhodope listened patiently, while her friend tried to comfort her. When he had finished, she said,—

“I thank you, Phanes,—sooner or later I will forget this shame. Time is the healer of all sorrows. Were I weak, I would leave Naucratis and live far away from here—live only for my daughter. But it may not be; now that you are going, our friends cannot do without me. Amasis is old; if Psamtis should succeed him, I shall have to contend with greater difficulties than ever before. I must remain and fight for Hellenic prosperity, for Hellenic freedom to the last. I have no other aim in life, and to this I am all the more devoted that it is so seldom that to such purposes a woman can dedicate herself. They may perhaps call my work unwomanly. Be it so. In this night of tears have I felt that there is in me still infinitely much of that woman’s weakness which makes the sorrow and joy of our kind. To preserve in my grandchild this sensitiveness, and with it all the fullness of gentle womanhood, has been my first aim; my second to overcome it all in myself. Yet it is hard to fight with nature; in such a contest one must have many losing battles. If pain, if despair gain the upper hand, I can but remember the words of my friend Pythagoras, the noblest among mankind: ‘Have thou moderation in all things; keep thyself from wild joy and from wailing sorrow; strive to hold thy soul in harmony and concord, like the strings of a well-tuned harp.’ This peace of mind, this deep, undisturbed quietness of spirit I see before me in my Sappho, and I still struggle after it, for all the blows of fate which strike discord among the chords of my heart. Though I am now at rest, you do not know what power the mere remembrance of that great thinker, that calm, self-contained man, has in sending a sweet, soft music through my days. Had you but known him,

you would comprehend what I mean. Come, tell me what you would have of me ; my heart now is as peaceful as the waters of the Nile, that sleep so softly and flow so gently near us."

"I am glad to hear that," answered the Athenian ; "had you thought a little sooner of the illustrious 'lover of wisdom,' as Pythagoras was wont to call himself, your soul would soon again have found its balance. The master commands that one should on every evening live over in memory the thoughts and acts and feelings of the day that is past ; had you but done so, you would have quickly seen that the unfeigned admiration of all your guests, among whom were men of noblest deserts, outweighed a thousandfold the blackguard abuse of a drunken debauchee ; you would have felt yourself the chosen friend of the immortal gods, for in your home after years of misfortune did they give to that grand old Spartan the deepest delight that belongs to men ; and, last of all, if they took from you one friend, it was only to give you a better : do not answer, but let me begin with my request. My wife, as you know, is dead, and my children, a boy of eleven and a girl of ten, are with their aunt in Halicarnassus : I sent for them a few days ago ; they will not arrive for three weeks at Naucratis, and they will have started before a countermanding letter can reach them ; in fourteen days I must leave Egypt, and, therefore, I cannot receive the children myself. I have made up my mind to go to the Thracian Chersonesus, whither my uncle, who, as you know, is of the family of the Dolonci, has been ordered ; thither shall the children follow me. Conax my old slave will remain in Naucratis in order to bring them to me. Would you show that you are indeed my friend, receive and take care of them till a ship sails for Thrace, and above all, carefully conceal them from the spies of Psamtic ; you know what a deadly hate he bears me, and how easy it would be for him to reach the father through the children. I ask this great favor of you, first, because I know your kindness ; and, secondly, because through the letter of protection from the king which makes a sanctuary of your house, the little ones will be safe from the inquisition of the police, who are

accustomed to have all strangers, even children, registered. You see how much I think of you when I trust to your keeping the only thing that makes my life worth living: even my country is nothing to me while trodden down by the tyrant. Will you give peace to my anxious mind? Will you——”

“I will, I will, Phanes,” said Rhodope, eagerly. “You do not ask a favor, you make a gift. Oh, how I shall delight in the children, and how Sappho will rejoice when they come to enliven our solitude! But still I promise you, Phanes, they shall leave without fail in the first Thracian ship; you can do without them very well a short half-year, for they shall have the best possible discipline and instruction.”

“I have no fear on that score,” said Phanes, smiling; “but still I must insist upon your sending away these troublesome creatures by the first ship. My fear of Psamtic’s vengeance is, alas! only too well founded. Take then in anticipation my heartiest thanks for your love and kindness to the children: I think, too, the distraction they will be to Sappho will do her good in her loneliness.”

“And, besides,” interrupted Rhodope, “this mark of confidence will make me forget the drunken insults of last night. Ah, here comes Sappho.”

CHAPTER IV.

THE COMING OF THE EMBASSY.

FIVE days after the dinner at the house of Rhodope, there was gathered at the harbor at Sais an immense crowd: Egyptians of every age, sex, and rank stood densely packed on the edge of the river; soldiers, and merchants in white robes trimmed with gaudy fringe, whose length indicated the rank of the wearer, mingled themselves with the herd of muscular, half-naked men, whose only garment consisted of an apron, the ordinary dress of the vulgar; naked children squeezed and pushed

and fought each other for the best place—women, clad in short cloaks, held up their children that these might not lose the coveted sight. A crowd of dogs and cats spit and snapped around the feet of the lookers-on, who moved with the greatest care, so as not to hurt the sacred animals. Constables with long staves, whose metal tops bore the name of the king, maintained order and quiet, taking especial care that no one was pushed into the branch of the Nile, which in the time of the inundation flowed up to the walls of Sais,—a precaution which several accidents fully justified.

On the broad steps, lined with sphinxes, which led down to the water from the garden of the palace, was an assemblage of a very different sort. Here, upon stone benches, sat the most honored of the priests in long white garments, with white fillets on their heads, and white staves in their hands. In their midst one could distinguish the chief judge by the waving ostrich-feather in his cap, though some of the priests wore smaller ones, and by a costly amulet of sapphire which hung on a golden chain upon his breast. The captains of the Egyptian army wore parti-colored coats, and in their belts short swords; a division of the body-guard, armed with battle-axes, daggers, bows, and huge shields, was stationed on the right of the steps; on the left were Greek soldiers in the Ionic dress; their new commander, our friend Aristomachus, stood with some inferior officers apart from the Egyptians, near the colossal statues of Psamtic I. which looked down upon the river from the space above the stairs. In front of these, on a silver chair, sat the heir-apparent, Psamtic, dressed in a close-fitting coat embroidered in gold; he was surrounded by the most eminent of the courtiers, chamberlains, counsellors, and friends of the king, who carried flabella, and wands tipped with golden lotos-flowers, in their hands.

The crowd vented their impatience by shouting and singing, while the priests and nobles sat in dignified silence on the steps opposite; each in his calmness, and with his stiff, artificial curls, and precisely-cut false beard, looking like the great images which sit motionless in their places, gazing solemnly and fixedly on the eternal river.

Suddenly a lateen sail of scarlet and blue silk was seen in the distance. The people shouted with joy, "There they are!" "Take care, now, you'll hurt the cat!" "Nurse, hold the girl higher that she may see something!" "Look out now, Sebak, you'll push me into the water!" "See there, Phœnician, the boys are putting burrs into your beard!" "Now, now, Greek, you needn't think Egypt belongs to you because Amasis lets you live on the holy stream!"

"Impudent scoundrels, these Greeks! down with them!" exclaimed a temple-servant. "Down with the pig-eaters and despisers of the gods!" sounded from all sides.

The crowd began to carry its intentions into effect; the officers, however, would not allow themselves to be jested with, and bringing into play their long rods, soon restored quiet.

The huge, motley sails, easily distinguishable among the hundred blue, white, and brown ones of the smaller Nile-boats, approached the expectant crowd. Then the heir-apparent and the grandees rose from their places. The trumpeters of the king sounded a fanfare of welcome as the first of the ships reached the steps; the vessel was richly gilded, and bore on its beak the silver image of a sparrow-hawk; in the middle of it stood a golden canopy with a scarlet top; under this lay large cushions; in the forepart of the ship along the bulwarks sat twelve rowers, their aprons fastened by costly braces. Under the canopy were six men gorgeously dressed and noble to look upon.

Before the ship had fairly touched the shore, the first to spring upon the steps was the youngest of all, a glorious, fair-haired youth. At sight of him, from the lips of many a young Egyptian girl a prolonged "Oh" of admiration escaped, and even the solemn expression of some of the dignitaries brightened into a pleasant smile. The cause of all this sensation, Bartia, the son of the late, and brother of the reigning king of Persia, had received from nature all that the heart of twenty-two could ask. From under the blue and white cloth which was woven round his tiara, thick, golden hair escaped in wanton profusion; his blue eyes shone with life and mirth,

kindness and mischief; and pride, too, had a place there; his noble face was worthy to be the subject for a Grecian chisel; and his slender, muscular figure showed great strength and activity; his beauty was only equalled by the splendor of his dress. In the middle of the tiara which he wore gleamed a star of diamonds and turquoise. His upper garment, of heavy white gold brocade reaching to his knees, was fastened at the waist by a girdle of blue and white, the royal colors of Persia; he wore a short golden sword, whose handle and sheath were studded with white opals and blue turquoises; his pantaloons, gathered in at the ankles, half covered his bright blue leather shoes. His naked, sinewy arms, which the flowing sleeves of his dress allowed to be seen, were adorned with several costly bracelets of gold and precious stones, and from his slender neck a gold chain hung down upon his broad chest.

Following him came Darius, the son of Hystaspes, an illustrious young Persian of royal blood, dressed like Bartia, but more plainly; the third was an old man with snow-white hair and a mild, pleasant face. He wore a long purple garment and yellow Lydian boots; his appearance was very unassuming, and yet this simple old man had been not long before the most envied person of his time, whose name has for more than two thousand years been the nickname of the very rich; in him we recognize Cræsus, the dethroned king of Lydia, who was now living as a friend and adviser at the court of Cambyses, and who had accompanied Bartia to Egypt as his mentor. After him came Prexaspes, the special ambassador of the king; Zopyrus, the son of Megabyzus, a noble Persian, friend of Bartia and Darius; last of all appeared Gyges, the thin, pale son of Cræsus, who, having become dumb in his fourth year, had recovered his speech in the agony he went through at the taking of Sardis.

Psamtic descended the steps to welcome the strangers, his sallow, harsh face trying to assume a friendly smile; the dignitaries, who followed him, letting their arms hang down, bowed almost to the ground before the new-comers. The Persians, their arms crossed upon their breasts,

prostrated themselves before the prince. When the first formalities were over, Bartia, after the custom of his country, kissed the yellow cheek of the Egyptian king's son, much to the astonishment of the people not accustomed to such a sight, and then betook himself with his hosts to the litters which were waiting to take him and his suite to the apartments assigned him in the palace. Part of the crowd followed the foreigners, but most of the people stayed to see the spectacle so entirely new to them.

"Are you going after the dressed-up monkeys and the other children of Typhon?" asked a surly temple-servant of his neighbor, a respectable master-tailor of Sais. "I tell you, Puhor, and the high-priest says so too, these intruders will bring the black country nothing but harm. There was nothing like this in the good old times when no alien who valued his life could set his foot on Egyptian ground; now our streets swarm with lying Jews and shameless Greeks. May the gods destroy them! Just look there, if that is not the third ship crammed with these foreigners; and do you know who these Persians are? The high-priest says that there is not a single temple for the gods in their immense country, which is as large as half the world; and the corpses of their dead are always cast out to the dogs and vultures."

The tailor made a gesture of great astonishment and still greater indignation; then he pointed with his fingers towards the landing and said, "Now if that is not too bad,—there is the sixth shipload of these outsiders!"

"Yes, it is too bad," sighed the other. "One would suppose they were bringing an army. Amasis will not stop till the strangers drive him from the throne and plunder and oppress us, as the wicked Hyksos, the destroyers, and the black Ethiopians did."

"The seventh ship!" exclaimed the tailor.

"May my mistress Neith destroy me," complained his companion, "if I understand the king! Three ships has he sent to that damnable nest of venom, Naucratis, for the baggage and servants of these Persian ambassadors, and instead of three, eight boats have come; for besides the cooking utensils, dogs, horses, wagons, chests, baskets,

and bags, these scandalous despisers of the gods have brought a whole army of servants,—among others, fellows who have nothing else to do than weave wreaths or prepare ointments; and their priests, too, who are called *Magi*, have accompanied them. I would like to know what is the use of them. How can there be a priest where there is no temple?"

Four days after this, as Amasis and Cræsus sat talking in the palace-garden, the conversation turned upon their respective fortunes, and the Egyptian listened while his guest told him of his own former prosperity, his immense wealth, and his peaceful reign, and then of the misery of his defeat and overthrow, and last of all, of his happy life now at the court of Cambyses.

"Why, Cræsus!" exclaimed the other, "I, 'The Sun of Justice,' 'The Child of Neith,' 'The Lord of Fame,' as the Egyptians call me, am tempted to envy you, the plundered and dethroned. Once I was as happy as you, when, as the poor son of a captain, I was well known through all Egypt for my high spirits, my love of mischief, my joyous levity, and my indomitable pride; the common soldiers petted me, and my superiors had many complaints to make of the wild Amasis, though almost entire license was given him. And my companions, the subordinate officers, thought no feast complete without me. Such was I when Hophra put us in the expedition against Cyrene; fainting in the desert, we refused to go farther. The suspicion that the king wanted to sacrifice us to the Greeks drove us into open rebellion. In jest, as usual, I said to my companions, 'You are not complete without a king; make me your commander; you'll not find a merrier one.' The soldiers caught up the words. 'Amasis for king!' they cried, company after company, man after man. 'The good, the merry Amasis shall be our king!' they repeated.

"When a boon-companion had put the helmet of a commander on my head, I made the sport earnest; the soldiers supported me, and we defeated Hophra at M Memphis. The people joined the rebellion, I mounted the throne, and they called me happy.

“Till then I was the friend of every Egyptian, now I was the enemy of the best of the land. The priests swore allegiance to me and admitted me into their caste, because they hoped to be able to guide me according to their will; my former superiors envied me, and were anxious to renew their old intercourse, but you see this was not consistent with my new office, and would have been the destruction of my dignity; so, one day when the army officers were carousing with me, and were trying to repeat their old frolics, I showed them the gold basin in which the feet of the guests were washed, and five days later, I placed on the table, when they were feasting, an image of the great god Ra, which they immediately fell down before and worshipped. When they rose I lifted my sceptre high and solemnly said,—

“‘This sacred image that a workman has made in five days was a common pot, in which you wash your feet. I myself was once a thing as vile, but the gods, who work more quickly and skilfully than any goldsmith, have made me your king; fall down, therefore, and worship me: he who obeys not, forgets what reverence he owes the king, and that death is the penalty of his crime.’

“Then they prostrated themselves all, all. My dignity was maintained, but my friends were gone forever.

“Then I had need of some other firm support, and turned therefore to the Greeks, who are, as soldiers, worth five times as many Egyptians. Knowing that I had the courage to carry through what I thought was right, from thenceforward they always surrounded me. I learned their language, they made me acquainted with the greatest man I ever met, Pythagoras. I tried to introduce Greek art and Greek manners, for I saw that it would be foolish to cling to old customs, when what was so much better lay right before us. I divided the whole land according to a plan, I established the best police in the world, and altogether accomplished much; yet my highest purpose—the infusing of Greek intelligence, Greek feeling for beauty, Greek enjoyment of life, and free Hellenic art into this motley-colored but gloomy land—was wrecked on that rock which threatens destruction to everything I attempt. The priests are my stumbling-blocks, my opposers, my

masters. It is they who cleave with such superstitious respect to tradition, to whom everything alien is an abomination, and who regard every foreigner as the enemy of their dignity and learning. It is they who rule the people with a boundless sway: therefore to them must I sacrifice the fairest of my plans; therefore must I, a mere wretched puppet, see my whole life pass according to their decrees; therefore must I die a disappointed man, with all my schemes thwarted, nor even be sure that this haughty and offended host of mediators between the gods and men will give me rest in the grave. Do you see those boys? They are the sons of the most distinguished of the priests, and are the bitterest plagues of my life: they perform for me the functions of slaves, obeying my slightest nod. One would suppose that those who devote their children to such duties were the most obedient and loyal servants of their divinely-honored king; but believe me, Cræsus, even for this service, which no ruler can forego without giving offence, there is a sly, mean reckoning made. Every one of those youths is my keeper, my spy. I cannot lift a finger without their knowing it, and if I do lift it, the priests will hear of it within an hour."

"But why do you permit such a condition of things? Exclude these spies from your presence, and choose your servants from the warrior-caste, for instance, who will be not less useful to you than the priests."

"I cannot. I dare not!" cried Amasis, passionately. Then he continued more quietly, as if frightened at his own vehemence, "I believe that I am watched even here; to-morrow I will have this fig-tree dug up; that young gardening priest, who is breaking off the unripe figs yonder, has come in search of other fruit than that which he is so leisurely putting into his basket: the hand plucks the fruit, but the ear the words of his king."

"But by father Zeus and Apollo——"

"I understand your indignation, and share it; but every privilege has its duties; and as monarch of this land of tradition, in all great matters I honor the ancient customs of the court. I would break my chains, could I but be assured that they would leave my body undisturbed, for you must know that the priests hold a trial over every

one that dies, and they who are condemned are deprived of burial."

"Why trouble yourself about the grave?" said Cræsus, impatiently; "one lives for life, not for death."

"You should say rather," answered Amasis, rising from his seat, "we Greeks think more of a happy life than of anything else; but I, Cræsus, was begotten by an Egyptian father, was suckled by an Egyptian mother, have been fed by Egyptian food, and though I have acquired much that is Hellenic, yet in my heart of hearts I am Egyptian. What was sung to you in your childhood, what was taught you as sacred in your youth, will sound in your heart until it is wrapped in the mummy-cloths. I am an old man, and have but a short span of time to pass through before I reach the boundary stone, where the world beyond begins; shall I for these brief days forfeit the ages after death? No, no, my friend; in this I am yet an Egyptian, that I, as each of my countrymen, steadfastly believe that on the preservation of this body—the servant of the soul—depends the welfare of my second life in the kingdom of Osiris. And yet, death has its terrors for us too, and one tries to escape him when he shows himself. Our doctors would not be so famous and respected, if we did not believe that they could prolong our existence here: and that reminds me of our oculist, Nebenchari, whom I sent to the king at Susa. Is he approved of? Are they satisfied with him?"

"Very well," answered Cræsus; "he has been of great service to many a blind person, though there is no hope for the queen-mother. It was he who first told Cambyses of the loveliness of your daughter Tachot. We regret, though, that he only understands curing the eyes; he could not be persuaded to give any advice when the Princess Atossa had the fever."

"That was a matter of course; for our physicians can only undertake one particular part of the body: we have ear, eye, tooth doctors, doctors for fractures, doctors for internal diseases; no dentist by the old priestly laws can treat a case of deafness, no surgeon a case of internal disease, how well soever he may understand it. By these regulations great thoroughness is attained, for the

priests, to whose caste the physicians belong, apply themselves to science with great ardor. Yonder is the house of the high-priest, Neithotep, whose knowledge of astronomy and geometry even Pythagoras commended; it lies next to the hall that leads to the temple of Neith, the titular goddess of Sais. I wish I could show you the sacred grove with its lordly trees and the costly pillars of the sanctuary, whose capitals are in the shape of lotos-flowers, and the immense shrine of granite, which was carved by my order, at Elephantia, out of a single stone, in honor of the goddess,—but the priests unfortunately forbid the admittance of strangers. Come, we will now visit my wife and daughters, for they have taken a great fancy to you, and I want you to have as friendly feelings as possible to the poor girl, before you carry her off to a strange land, and among strange people, whose queen she is to be. You will take care of her, will you not?"

"You may trust me entirely," answered Cræsus, heartily. "I will be to your Nitetis as a father, and she will have need of me, for the seraglios of the Persian palaces have slippery floors: she will, I am sure, receive great respect, for Cambyses must be pleased with his choice, and will not think it a small thing that you have given him your fairer daughter. Nebenchari spoke only of your other child Tachot."

"Still I can only send my beautiful Nitetis. Tachot is so delicate that she could not bear the fatigues of the journey and the pain of separation: if I had consulted my own feelings, even Nitetis should not go to Persia. But Egypt needs peace, and I am a king before I am a father."

CHAPTER V.

A ROYAL CAROUSE.

ALL the members of the Persian embassy, except Prexaspes, who was on his way home to tell the king of the success of his suit, had just come back to Sais from a journey to the Pyramids. And in the palace of Amasis all was full of life and animation. The suite of Cambyses' envoys, which consisted of nearly three hundred men, and the distinguished guests, to whom every attention was shown, filled every part of the great residence of Sais: the courts swarmed with soldiers of the body-guard, nobles, young priests, and slaves in richest festal robes.

The wish of the king was to-day, in a banquet, given in honor of the betrothal of his daughter, to make a brilliant display of the wealth and splendor of his court. The lofty hall of reception, supported on parti-colored pillars, its blue roof sprinkled with a thousand golden stars, was dazzling to behold. On the walls and columns, covered with hieroglyphics, hung lamps of painted papyrus, which shone with a strange light, not unlike that of the rays of the sun streaming through stained glass. The space between the walls and the pillars was filled with choice plants, palms, oleanders, pomegranates, oranges, and roses, and behind these was hidden an invisible orchestra of players on the flute and harp, who welcomed the guests with solemn monotonous music.

The company consisted of men and women of all ages: to the young girls upon their entering the room, the youthful priests, the personal servants of the king, offered branches of flowers. The Egyptians, dressed in the same way as at the first reception of the envoys, were polite, almost obsequious to the women, among whom were some very beautiful, and most of whom wore their hair low upon their temples, with roses and lotos-flowers wreathed

around their foreheads. In their hands, covered with rings, the nails tinted red after the Egyptian fashion, they carried fans of many-colored feathers, and on their wrists and ankles they wore gold and silver bracelets. Their dresses were rich and beautiful, and many of them were so cut as to leave the right breast uncovered.

As Bartia was the most distinguished by his grace among the men, so was Nitetis, the daughter of the Pharaoh, among the women. The princely maiden, dressed in a transparent pink robe, with fresh roses in her black hair, walked at the side of her sister, who was as pale as the lotos-flower that adorned her mother's head.

Ladice, the queen, a Grecian by birth, being the daughter of Battus of Cyrene, accompanied the king, and presented the young Persians to their children. She wore a delicate lace robe over her gold-embroidered scarlet dress. On her forehead she bore a golden asp, the ornament of Egyptian princesses: her face was noble and gracious, and every movement showed that grace which only a Grecian training could give. Amasis, after the death of his first spouse, the Egyptian Tentcheta, the mother of Psamtic, had chosen this woman for his wife and queen, yielding to his partiality for the Greeks, and defying, for once, the wrath of the priests.

The two maidens at Ladice's side, Tachot and Nitetis, were said to be twins, though they showed no trace of that resemblance which is generally found under those circumstances. Tachot was fair-haired and blue-eyed, small and slightly-built; while Nitetis, tall and full, with black eyes and hair, showed in every gesture that she was sprung of a royal house.

"How pale you look, my daughter!" said Ladice, kissing the cheek of Nitetis. "Be of good courage and without fear for the future; I bring you the brother of your intended husband, the noble Bartia."

Nitetis raised her dark, thoughtful eyes, and looked searchingly at the handsome youth, who bowed low, and kissed the robe of the blushing girl.

"I greet you as my future queen and sister. I can easily understand how full of pain for you is the parting from all who are dear to you. But do not fear; your

husband is a great hero and a mighty king. Our mother Cassandane is the noblest among women; and feminine beauty and goodness are honored among the Persians even as is the life-giving light of the sun. And to you, too, sister of Nitetis the lily, whom next to her I would call the rose, I pray for pardon that we have come to rob you of your dearest friend."

The young man's gaze when he spoke these words fell full upon the beautiful face of Tachot, who bowed in silence, and who still followed Bartia with her eyes when Amasis led him away to find him a place opposite the dancing-girls, who were displaying their accomplishment for the amusement of the guests. They were dressed in one single light garment, and bent and turned their supple limbs to the music of the harps and tambourines; then the Egyptian singers gave their sweetest songs and the clowns their drollest jests.

At last a few of the courtiers left the hall, forgetting in their drunkenness their solemn bearing. The women, conducted by slaves, went home in their gaudy litters. The Persian envoys, and some of the court dignitaries, especial friends of Amasis, were asked to wait by the high chamberlain, and were then led into a richly ornamented room, where a table supporting, after the Greek fashion, a gigantic mixing-bowl stood, invitingly suggestive of a midnight carouse. Amasis sat in a raised chair at the head of the table, at his left the young Bartia, at his right the white-haired Cræsus. Besides these and some other Persians, there were present also our old acquaintances, Theodorus and Ibycus, the friends of Polycrates, and the present commander of the Hellenic body-guard, Aristomachus the Spartan.

Amasis, whom we heard so short a time ago talking with such earnestness to Cræsus, was now surpassing himself in irony and wit. He seemed to have become again the wild young officer and reckless boon-companion of former years. In his noisy vivacity he flung about jests and witticisms, teasing and making fun of his friends: the well-trained laughter that royal jocularities are used to call forth responded to his mirth. Glass after glass was emptied, and the merriment had reached its climax,

when the chamberlain appeared with a little gilded mummy, and having shown it to the company, he called out,—

“Drink, jest, and be merry, for soon you will be all like this.”

“Is this grim reminder of death always displayed at your feasts?” asked Bartia, gravely, of the king; “or is this a jest that your license has permitted to the chamberlain?”

“From the earliest times,” answered Amasis, “are they wont to show these mummies, in order to increase the mirth and to remind the revellers that they should enjoy, while there is yet time, their pleasant companions. You, young butterfly, have long years of joy before you, but we old fellows, friend Cræsus, must regard this warning. Here, butler, fill up our glasses quickly; let no moment pass idly by. How you golden-haired Persians can drink! Truly, the gods have given you good throats as well as beautiful eyes. Go kiss, you glorious youth, you mischievous rogue! What do you think, Cræsus, my daughter Tachot talks of nothing but this beardless boy, who threatens with his winning looks and his sweet words to turn her little head! Oh, come, you need not blush, young madcap. You may gaze as long as you like after kings’ daughters; but my Tachot should not go to Persia were you father Cyrus himself.”

“Father,” whispered Psamtic, interrupting him, “hold your tongue and remember Phanes!”

The king looked darkly at his son, and following his advice joined only at intervals in the general conversation.

Aristomachus, who sat diagonally opposite to Cræsus, had been steadily gazing at the Persians without uttering a syllable or smiling at any of the fun. When the Pharaoh was silent, the Spartan turned suddenly to Cræsus and said,—

“I would like to know, Lydian, whether the snow was on the mountains when you left Persia?”

Cræsus, astonished at this odd question, answered, smiling, “Most of the mountains of the Persian range were clothed in green when we left for Egypt, four months ago. Still there are peaks in the country of Cambyses

on which, even in the height of summer, the snow never melts, and these shone white in the distance when we were descending into the plain-country."

The face of the Spartan brightened at this, and Cræsus, whom the grave man had pleased, asked his name.

"I am called Aristomachus."

"I should know that name."

"You know many Greeks, and it is a common name among us."

"By your dialect, you should belong to the Doric race. You are a Spartan, are you not?"

"I was one."

"And are one no longer?"

"He who leaves his home without permission is punishable with death."

"And you left yours without being sent?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"To escape disgrace."

"What had you done?"

"Nothing."

"They accused you then unjustly of a crime?"

"Yes."

"Who caused your misfortune?"

"You."

Cræsus started from his seat: the earnest tone and serious face of the Spartan forbade the notion of a jest; even their fellow-guests, who had been listening to this strange dialogue, were startled, and demanded of Aristomachus an explanation of his extraordinary outburst.

The Spartan hesitated; all saw that he was unwilling to speak, but the king calling upon him for his story, he began:

"Cræsus, when you were preparing to obey the oracle, you had chosen us Lacedæmonians, as being the most powerful of the Greeks, for your allies against the Persians, and had made a gift of money to the temple of Apollo Hermes on Mount Thormax. The Ephori resolved to acknowledge it by sending you a large finely carved cratera. I was appointed to take it. Before I reached Sardis, a storm wrecked our ship, the mixing-bowl sank with it, and

we arrived at Samos with our lives alone saved. When I reached home I was accused by my envious enemies of having sold the ship and the craters to the Samian merchants. As they could not convict and yet wished to ruin me, I was condemned to pass two whole days and nights in the stocks. They fastened me in at night; before the morning of my shame began to grow gray, my brother came and handed me a sword secretly. I would have died sooner than suffer disgrace. Yet I could not die, for the duty of vengeance lay upon me, and therefore I cut off my bound foot and concealed myself in the reeds of the Eurotas. My brother brought me food and drink secretly; in two months I could walk on this wooden leg. Far-darting Apollo undertook my revenge, for my worst enemies perished in the plague. In spite of their death I could not return, and I finally took ship for Gythium, in order, Cræsus, to fight for you, at Sardis, against the Persians. When I landed at Teos I learned that you were no longer king. The powerful Cyrus, the father of this handsome youth, had, in a few weeks, conquered Lydia and made the world's richest king a beggar."

When Aristomachus had finished his story, Ibycus told of the oracle, which promised to the Spartan his recall upon the approach of the men from the snow-clad mountains, and spoke in passing of the hospitable house of Rhodope. Psamtic's face darkened when he heard that name, while Cræsus expressed a wish to know the old Thracian, of whom Æsop had spoken very highly; and when the guests were leaving the room, most of them utterly intoxicated, the dethroned king, the poet, the sculptor, and the Spartan soldier agreed to go to Naucratis on the following day to enjoy the society of Rhodope.

CHAPTER VI.

FATHER AND SON.

KING AMASIS had scarcely tasted, after the banquet, three hours of sleep, when, as usual, the young priests roused him and led him to the bath, adorned him with regal ornaments, and conducted him to an altar in the court of the palace, where he offered a sacrifice before the people, while the high-priest sang prayers in a loud voice, describing the virtues of the king, and beseeching the gods to turn all reproof from him and to make his evil counsellors answer for what accursed sins he might ignorantly have committed. Then, still following the ordinary routine, the priests gave him good advice, praising his piety to the skies, and read to him, from the holy writings, about the deeds and maxims of the great men; then they conducted him to his apartments, where letters and reports from every quarter of the country awaited him. To these daily-repeated ceremonies and business occupations Amasis indeed used to put a limit by spending the latter portion of the day as it pleased him, generally in pleasant society.

He had finished his last letter, which was a favorable answer to the petition of a monarch for funds for several levees which the inundation had rendered necessary, when a servant entered to announce to him that Prince Psamtic had come to ask his father's permission for a few minutes' audience. Amasis, who had been smiling at the favorable reports from all parts of the land, became at once serious and thoughtful. At last he said, after some hesitation,—

“Go tell the prince that he may come.”

Psamtic, pale and gloomy as ever, bowed himself low and respectfully as he crossed his father's threshold. Amasis acknowledged his obeisance with a silent gesture, and then asked, sternly,—

“What do you want of me? My time is measured.”

"Especially for your son," answered Psamtic, with quivering lips. "Seven times have I asked for the grace which you grant to-day for the first time."

"No fault-finding! I guess the reason of your coming: you wish to clear up your doubts as to the asserted parentage of Nitetis."

"I am not inquisitive, and come rather to warn you and to remind you that there lives another beside ourselves who knows this secret."

"Phanes?"

"Who else? He who, banished both from Egypt and his own country, will leave Naucratis in a few days. What is our guarantee that he will not betray us to the Persians?"

"The kindness and friendship that I have always shown him."

"So you believe then in the gratitude of men?"

"No; but I trust to my own power of judging of its genuineness. Phanes will not betray us; I repeat, he is my friend."

"Your friend perhaps, but my deadly enemy."

"Then guard yourself from him; I have nothing to fear."

"Perhaps not you, but our country; remember, father, if your son is hateful to you, Egypt's future lies near your heart; remember that after your death,—which may the gods long prevent!—I shall be, as you are now, the crowned majesty of Egypt, that with my fall will fall our country and your dynasty."

Amasis grew grave as Psamtic continued, eagerly: "You will, you must acknowledge that I am right. This Phanes has it in his power to surrender our land to a foreign enemy; for he knows that in his breast slumbers a secret whose betrayal would make our most powerful friend to be our most terrible foe."

"You are wrong; Nitetis is not indeed my child, yet she is the daughter of a king, and she will besides know how to win her husband's heart."

"Were she the daughter of a god, Cambyses would be furious with us, if he were told this secret; do you know that the Persians think lying the foulest disgrace, and to

deceive the greatest of crimes? and you have tricked the proudest and mightiest of them. And what can an inexperienced girl do in the midst of the hundred intrigues with which his well-trained wives are ever trying to win his favor?"

"What wonderful teachers of eloquence are hate and revenge!" said Amasis, with a sneer. "Foolish son! do you think that I would have undertaken this dangerous game without weighing all the circumstances well? Let Phanes tell the Persians, for aught I care, all that he guesses; for he has not any certain knowledge or a particle of proof. I, the father, and Ladice, the mother, ought to know best who are our own children. We say Nitetis is our daughter: who dare assert she is not? Let Phanes betray the weakness of our land to yet other foes if he will, I fear none. If you are here to ask me to sacrifice a man to whom I owe much, a friend who has served me faithfully for ten years, until he offended me by his sacrilege, I tell you that, so far from injuring, I am ready to shelter him from your revenge, whose lustful cause I know."

"My father!"

"You want to destroy him because he prevented you from carrying off the granddaughter of Rhodope by force, because when you showed yourself incompetent, I made him commander in your place. Ah, you turn pale! I thank Phanes that he told me of your profligate plans, and so gave me the opportunity of bringing closer to myself those props of my kingdom, to whom Rhodope is so dear."

"Father! that you should so style these aliens, that you should so far forget Egypt's ancient glory! Insult me if you like, I know that you do not love me, but do not say we need the foreigners in order to be great. Look back at our history: when were we greatest? then when we shut our gates upon every outsider without exception; standing on our own feet, trusting to our own strength, and living according to the time-honored laws of our fathers and our gods. Those days saw Rameses the Great subdue with victorious arms the distant nations of the earth; those days heard Egypt called the first, the

greatest of all lands. What are we now? From your, the king's, own mouth I hear these alien beggars and adventurers called 'props of the kingdom.' I see you, the king, with miserable cunning intriguing for the friendship of a race from which, before these aliens came to the Nile, we won great victories. Egypt was once a mighty queen; now she is a bedizened wench."

"Be silent!" exclaimed the king, stamping furiously on the ground. "Egypt was never greater or more flourishing than now; *Rameses*, indeed, carried our arms into far lands, and won them with blood; but I have succeeded in making the works of our hands sought for from the ends of the world, which bring, instead of blood, treasures and blessings. *Rameses* poured out the blood and sweat of his subjects for the glory of his name; and I have made that blood should flow sparingly in my kingdom, and sweat only in useful labor, and that every citizen should pass his life in safety, happiness, and prosperity: on the banks of the Nile rise now ten thousand populous towns; not a foot of this land lies barren; not a man in Egypt is deprived of the benefit of law and justice; not a criminal can escape the vigilant eye of authority. Should the foe assail us, we can stand behind fortresses and bulwarks that the gods have given us, the cataracts, the sea, and the desert; with the best soldiers that ever bore arms, thirty thousand Greeks, besides the Egyptian warrior-caste ready at our side. So is it with Egypt; for the tinsel splendor of a conqueror's fame it paid *Rameses* a tribute of blood and tears. The true gold of civic prosperity and peace it owes to me and my predecessors, the kings of the line of *Sais*."

"Yet I tell you," answered *Psamtic*, "that Egypt is a tree at whose heart a deadly worm is gnawing; this struggle after wealth, after splendor and show, has corrupted all. The luxury and wantonness of the strangers have given the death-blow to our simple manners; anything can be bought for money; you often hear Egyptians, seduced by these Greeks, mocking at their ancient gods; discord and contention are tearing in pieces the military and priestly castes. There are daily conflicts between the Hellenic soldiers and the Egyptian warriors,

between the aliens and the natives; the shepherd and the sheep are quarrelling, and soon the whole fabric of the state must fall into utter destruction. Yes, father, if I do not speak now, I must be forever silent. Taken up with your conflicts with the priests, you have calmly looked on, while the vigorous might of the Persians, a nation-devouring monster, which, after each gorging, grows stronger and more terrible, advances swiftly from the east. Instead of going to the assistance of the Lydians and Babylonians, as you would have done originally, you employed yourself in helping the Greeks to build a temple for their lying gods. And when at last all resistance appeared impossible, when the Persians had subjugated half the world, and were exacting what they pleased from all the kings of the earth, then it seemed as if the immortals were ready to give a chance of salvation to Egypt; Cambyses asked for your child's hand, but you, too weak to sacrifice your own offspring to the common welfare, send the great king a pretended daughter, and spare, weak-spirited as you are, a stranger who holds in his hand the weal or woe of your kingdom, and who will destroy it, if, eaten up by discord, it does not fall to pieces before he can make use of his power."

Up to this point, Amasis, pale and trembling with rage, had listened, while all that was dearest to him was being outraged, and, at last, no longer containing himself, he exclaimed in a voice that rang through the wide hall like the blast of a trumpet,—

"Do you know which one of the two I would the rather sacrifice, were not the life of my children and the maintenance of my dynasty dearer to me than the good of my country? Do you know, boastful, vindictive son of evil, who is to be the future destroyer of this grand old kingdom? You, Psamtic, are the man marked by the gods, the man feared by his fellow-men, whose heart knows no love, whose breast no friendship, whose face no smile, whose soul no compassion. You little reck of the wretchedness of your life, and of the miserable consequences that follow your evil schemes. Listen now, for it must be told at last, though I have hitherto, in misjudged kindness, kept it secret. When I had overthrown

my predecessor, I compelled him to give me his sister Tentcheta to wife; she learned to love me and gave promise, a year after our wedding, of making me the father of a child. In the night before your birth, I fell asleep as I sat watching at your mother's bedside; I dreamed she was lying on the banks of the Nile and was complaining to me of great pain in her breast. I bent over her and saw that a cypress was growing out of her heart; the tree rose ever higher, broader, and darker, and its roots wound around your mother and strangled her. A cold shudder seized me; I tried to flee; suddenly there came a fearful hurricane from the east and cast down the cypress so that its branches struck the Nile; the stream ceased to flow, the waters dried up, and in place of the river a gigantic mummy lay before me; the towns on the bank shrivelled up and became great sepulchral urns, which, as in a tomb, surrounded the corpse of the Nile. Then I awoke and sent for the wise men; but no one could explain the strange vision, until at last the priests of Libyan Ammon sent me this interpretation: 'Tentcheta dies in giving birth to a son; it is he, a dark, ominous man, whom the cypress killing the mother signifies: under his rule, a people east of the Nile, that is to say, the Egyptians, become corpses, and their cities heaps of ruins.'

Psamtic stood opposite his father, rigid as an image of stone, while the latter continued,—

"Your mother did die at your birth. Red hair, the mark of the sons of Typhon, grows around your temples; you were a gloomy man; misfortune ever dogged you, for it robbed you of the wife of your love, and of four of your children. As I, in the lucky sign of Ammon, so you, by the astronomer's calculations, were born at the rising of the direful planet Seb. You——"

Amasis suddenly stopped, for Psamtic, sobbing violently, and overpowered by the horrible picture that was conjured up to him, utterly gave way, and cried, groaning rather than speaking,—

"Cease, unnatural father, and do not go on to say that I am the only son in Egypt, who, though guiltless, is followed by his father's hate."

Amasis looked down at the pale and haggard man, who, hiding his face in the folds of his robe, had sunk at his feet. The king's quickly kindled wrath turned at once to pity; he felt that he had been too harsh, and had, by what he had told him, sent a poisoned arrow into Psamtic's heart; he thought of his son's mother, dead forty years before; and for the first time in many years he looked upon this dark, reserved, repellant man as a father and a comforter; his tender heart was touched, and he was glad now that he was able, for the first time, to wipe tears from the hard, dry eyes of his son. In joyful eagerness he seized the opportunity of showing his love; he bent over the stricken man, kissed his forehead, and, raising him up, said in a gentler tone,—

“Pardon my violence, my son: the wicked words which wounded you did not come from the heart of Amasis, but from his furious rage; you have provoked me by long years of coldness, obstinacy, and estrangement, and to-day you offended my most sacred feelings; by all this was I urged to such headlong violence. Now all shall be made right between us; if we are so different in our natures that our hearts cannot melt into each other, at least we will remain upon good terms and be considerate towards each other.”

Psamtic, prostrating himself, humbly kissed his father's robe.

“Not so,” said the king. “Kiss my mouth; that is right, that is fitting between a father and his son. As to the dreary dream I told you of, think no more of it: all dreams are deceptive; admitting that they do come from the gods, those who interpret them are liable to human error. Your hand still trembles, your cheek is paler than your linen robe; I was hard to you, harder than a father——”

“Harder than one stranger should be to another,” said Psamtic, interrupting him. “You have broken and crushed me, and if hitherto my face seldom smiled, it will from henceforward be the picture of sorrow.”

“Not so,” said the king, laying his hand on the shoul-

der of his son. "If I make wounds, I have power to heal them. Tell me your dearest wish, it is granted."

Psamtic's eyes flashed, a slight color passed over his sallow cheeks, and, without hesitating, but in a voice which still trembled with the excitement he had undergone, he cried, "Deliver to me Phanes, my foe."

The king remained silent for a little while, busied with his thoughts. Then he said,—

"I knew you would ask this, and I will fulfil your wish ; but I would rather you had asked the half of my treasure, for a voice within tells me that I am about to do a thing that is unworthy of me,—a thing that will bring destruction to me, to you, to our country. All I ask of you is to consider once again before you act. I warn you that not a hair of Rhodope must be touched, and that the fate of my poor friend must be kept secret from the Greeks. Where shall I find an officer, an adviser, a companion like him? However, he is not yet in your power, and I tell you that though you may be a cunning Egyptian, he is a clever Greek. Above all, do not forget your oath to renounce every thought of Sappho. The compensation which I offer you is, I think, acceptable; for, if I am not much mistaken, revenge is sweeter to you than love. As far as Egypt is concerned, it never was more flourishing than now; it never occurs to any one to question this except the dissatisfied priests, and those who prate after their fashion. Would you like to hear the true account of the birth of Nitetis? Listen, then, for your own interests will compel you to be silent."

Psamtic did listen with eager attention, and thanked his father, when the latter had ended, by a hearty pressure of the hand.

"Now farewell," said Amasis. "Forget nothing that I have told you; and, above all, shed no blood. Whatever may be done to Phanes, I must know nothing of it, for I hate cruelty, and I should be sorry to be compelled to abhor my son. How glad you look! Poor Athenian, it had been better for you had you never seen this land!"

When Psamtic left his father's room, the latter walked thoughtfully to and fro. He repented him of his ac-

quiescence, and he seemed already to see the bleeding Athenian, and the shadow of the discrowned Hophra standing near.

"But he could have ruined us," he said, as if seeking an excuse. Then arousing himself, he stood up, and, calling to his servants, left the room with a smiling face. Had, then, this light-minded child of fortune so quickly appeased his troubled spirit? Or was he strong enough to hide beneath a smile the torment he was still suffering?

CHAPTER VII.

PSAMTIC'S PLOT.

PSAMTIC, on leaving his father's apartment, went immediately to the temple of the goddess Neith. At the entrance he asked for the high-priest. The temple-servants requested him to wait, for the great Neithotep was praying in the innermost sanctuary to the lofty queen of the heavens; and in a few moments a young priest appeared, who announced that his master was awaiting the prince.

Psamtic immediately left the cool place which he had taken on the edge of the hallowed pool of Neith and under the shadow of the silver poplars of the sacred grove; he walked over the asphalt-covered pavement of the temple-court, into which the dazzling sunbeams darted like glittering arrows, and entered one of the long Sphinx alleys which led to the open pylons or gates of the gigantic house of the goddess; then he passed through the principal entrance, which, like all Egyptian doors, was ornamented with a winged disk of the sun. On either side of the widely-opened portal rose towerlike structures and slender obelisks, from which fluttered hundreds of pennons. The whole front of the temple, which rose, like a fortress, at an obtuse angle, was covered with pictures and inscriptions. Through the porch he passed into a lofty

vestibule, and from thence into the nave itself, whose roof, sprinkled with thousands of golden stars, was supported by four rows of gigantic pillars. The shafts and lotos-shaped capitals, the walls and niches also of this immense hall were all covered with polycrome and hieroglyphics. The mighty temple lifted itself high into the air, and stretched far away into the distance. The air which the worshipper breathed was filled with incense, the perfume of kypbi, and the fumes from the temple laboratory. Soft music, from an invisible orchestra, seemed never to cease, and was broken only at intervals by the deep bellowings of the holy cattle of Isis, or the chattering of the sparrow-hawks of Horus. At the sound of the solemn, prolonged call of the cow, or the harsh, shrill cry of a sparrow-hawk, as though a bolt had fallen from heaven the squatting worshippers prostrated themselves, and touched with their foreheads the tiles of the temple floor.

In a raised sanctuary stood the priests,—some of whom wore ostrich-feathers on their shining bald heads, some panther-skins on their shoulders,—which were clothed in white; muttering and singing, they bowed down and rose up again; they swung censers, and poured out of golden libation-cups pure water, in honor of the gods.

Here in this vast place a man seemed to himself a pigmy; his eye, his ear, his very breath was taken captive by things utterly foreign to his everyday life. There was a weight upon his breast, and all his nerves trembled. Carried away from himself, he must seek some external support; to show him this the voice of the priest was ever ready, and the hidden music and the cries of the holy animals became to him as utterances of a divine presence.

After Psamtis, without being able to pray, had occupied for a little while the gilded and cushioned prayer-desk allotted to him, he went into the neighboring small and low-ceilinged room in which the beasts were kept. A curtain of costly stuff, covered with gold embroidery, concealed them from the eyes of the visitors to the temple, for the sight of these deified animals was seldom allowed to the people, and then only at a distance. As

Psamtic passed, cakes softened in milk, together with salt and clover, were being laid in the gold mangers of the cows, and small birds with motley feathers in the artistically-built houses of the sparrow-hawks.

The prince in his present mood had no disposition to look at these things, and ascended by means of a concealed staircase to those rooms near the observatory in which the priests between their services were accustomed to stay. Neithotep, an old man of seventy years, sat upon the purple cushions of a gilded chair, in a room hung with heavy Babylonish tapestry: his feet rested on a finely-carved stool, and in his hands he held a roll covered with hieroglyphics: behind him stood a boy, who drove away with a fan of ostrich-feathers the insects from his head. The face of the old priest was full of wrinkles, but seemed as if it had once been handsome: his large blue eyes spoke of quick intelligence and of conscious pride: he had laid aside his artificial hair, and the smoth, bald skull, set off by the wrinkled face, gave an appearance of height to the ordinarily low Egyptian forehead. The many-colored room, on whose walls a thousand sentences in hieroglyphic writing were painted, the variously-shaped images of the goddess in tinted stone which stood around, and the snowy whiteness of the priestly dresses, could not but make a curious and solemn impression upon a stranger.

The old man received the prince with great heartiness, and said,—

“What brings my illustrious son to the poor servant of the divinity?”

“I have much to report, my father,” replied Psamtic, with a triumphant smile; “for I come from Amasis.”

“He has given you, then, an audience at last?”

“At last.”

“Your face tells me that you have been graciously received by our lord the king?”

“After I had endured his rage. When I had laid before him the propositions with which you entrusted me, he was furiously angry, and almost annihilated me with his terrible words.”

“You must have offended him then? Or did you go

to the king, as I advised you, as an humble, suppliant son?"

"No, my father, I was angry, and showed it."

"Then Amasis had a right to be offended, for it is never fitting for a son to approach his parent in anger, more especially when he comes to ask a petition of that parent. You know the promise, 'He that honors his father will have a long life.' See, my disciple, in this you always err, that you attempt to carry through by rage and violence that which could be easily gained by kindness and gentleness. A good word is far stronger than a bad one, and much depends upon what language one uses. Listen, while I tell you a short story.

"Many years ago King Snefru, who ruled over Egypt from his capital city of Memphis, dreamed one night that all his teeth fell out of his mouth; he sent immediately to a teller of dreams, and made known to him his vision. The interpreter answered, 'O king, woe to you! all your relatives will die before you.' The enraged Snefru had the messenger of misfortune beaten, and then called a second seer, who explained the dream, and said, 'O great king, glory to you! for you will live longer than all your relatives.' The king smiled, and gave this man a rich present.

"Now, in like manner, do you look to the form of your speech, for, in a ruler's ear, as much depends on *how* one speaks as on *what* one speaks."

"O my father, how often have you given me this lesson; how often have I seen that I only thwart myself by my rough words and angry looks, but I cannot change my nature; I cannot——"

"Say I *will* not; for one who is really a man will never do again that which once done he afterwards repents of: but enough of this schooling. How did you appease your father's wrath?"

"You know how it is with my father; when he saw that by his terrible words he had wounded me to the quick, he was sorry. He felt that he had gone too far, and wished to atone for his severity at any cost."

"He has a good heart, but his intelligence is blinded and his soul led captive. What might not Amasis do for

Egypt, if he would but listen to our counsels, and the commands of the gods."

"Moved as he was, he at last,—do you hear, father?—at last, I say, he delivered into my hands the life of Phanes."

"How your eyes sparkle! Wrong, wrong, Psamtic. The Athenian must die because he has offended the gods. A judge, though he should sternly execute the sentence of the law, should not gloat, but rather sorrow, over the misery of the victim. Speak; what further did you accomplish?"

"The king told me to what family Nitetis owes her origin."

"Nothing else?"

"No; but, my father, are you not eager to know?"

"Curiosity is a woman's vice; besides, I have long known all you can tell me."

"You told me, yesterday, to ask, my father."

"I did, that I might prove you, whether you were devoted to the commands of the gods, and walked in that way which alone can make you worthy to be initiated into the higher mysteries of knowledge. I see that you tell us truly that which you find out, and can practise obedience, the first priestly virtue."

"You know, then, the father of Nitetis?"

"I myself sang the prayer at the grave of King Hophra."

"But who betrayed the secret?"

"The eternal stars, my son, and my power to read them."

"And these stars,—do they never deceive?"

"Never the really wise."

Psamtic turned pale. His father's dream and his own fearful horoscope stood out with terrible distinctness before his mind. The priest quickly noticed this change in the features of the prince, and said, in a gentler tone,—

"You are thinking of the ill-boding stars of your birth, and deem yourself a lost man; but be of good cheer, Psamtic. The astrologers missed a constellation that did not escape my eyes. Your horoscope was bad, very bad; but it can turn to good,—it must."

"Speak, father, speak!"

"It must turn to good if you, forgetting all else, live only for the gods, and obey the voice which we in the sanctuary alone hear."

"Give but the sign, my father, and I will obey."

"May the guardian of Sais, the mighty Neith, grant it," said the priest, in a solemn voice. "But now, my son," he continued, "leave me; for I am weary from long praying and the burden of my years. If it is possible, delay the death of Phanes. I would like to speak to him before he dies. Yet, another thing; yesterday a company of Ethiopians arrived here. These people cannot speak a word of Greek; they will be under the command of one of the faithful, who knows the Athenian and his haunts, and so they will be well suited for our purpose, as their ignorance of the language and the circumstances will make treason or idle prattle impossible. Before starting for Naucratis, these men must know nothing of the object of their journey; and, when the business is done, we will send them back to Cush. It is a secret that cannot be kept too carefully. Farewell."

Psamtic had scarcely gone when there entered a young priest, one of the servants of the king, who asked, "Have I heard aright, father?"

"Excellently well, my son. Nothing that Amasis said to Psamtic has escaped you. May Isis preserve your hearing!"

"A deaf man could have heard every word in the next room, for Amasis roared like a very bull."

"The great Neith has taken from him his ordinary prudence. Go now; be watchful, and inform me if Amasis, as is quite possible, makes any attempt to hinder the seizure of Phanes. You will find me here under any circumstances. Tell the servants to refuse all visitors, and to say that I am praying in the sanctuary. May he whose name we dare not speak guard thy steps!"

While Psamtic was making his preparations, Cræsus, with his companions, was entering a Nile-boat to start for Naucratis to spend the next evening with Rhodope. His son Gyges and the three young Persians remained at Sais, an arrangement much to their fancy. Amasis

overwhelmed them with kindnesses, allowed them, after the Egyptian custom, to share the society of his wife and the so-called twin sisters, taught them draughts, and was inexhaustible in his fun, especially when he saw the strong, manly young fellows so eagerly enjoying the game of graces, the delight of the Egyptian girls.

"We must introduce this game into our country," cried Bartia, after he had seen Nitetis catch for the hundredth time the ribbon-covered ring on her sticks of ivory. "We Persians are different from you Egyptians. Everything new and strange is as welcome to us as it seems to be hateful to you. I will tell our mother Cassandane of it, and she will gladly manage that my brother's wives have it as an amusement."

"Oh, do, do!" said Tachot. "Nitetis will play with them then, and will fancy herself at home and with those she loves; and do you, Bartia," she added softly, "remember, when you see the flying hoops, these hours in Egypt."

The young Persian answered kindly, "I shall never forget them;" and then, turning to his future sister-in-law he said, in a louder voice, "Do not fear, Nitetis, you will be happier with us than you think. We Asiatics know how to honor beauty. We show it by taking so many wives."

"You show by that," answered Ladice, "how little you appreciate women."

"As jealous as ever!" exclaimed the king. "One would suppose, friends, that she had reason to complain."

"Oh, no, my husband!" replied Ladice. "In this you Egyptians are to be preferred to all other husbands,—that you are true and constant and satisfied with one who is dear to you. In all the world, even in Greece itself, there is no woman so happy as the wife of an Egyptian. Had Phocylides of Miletus and Hipponax of Ephesus lived on the Nile, they would never have dared to write their scandalous verses against us; the story of Pandora would never have been invented here."

"What a pleasure it is to hear you talk!" said Bartia;

"and though learning Greek was trouble enough to me, I am very glad that I did not neglect the instructions of Cræsus."

"But who are these fellows who undertake to speak evil of women?" asked Darius.

"A couple of Greek poets," answered Amasis; "the boldest of men; for I would rather face a she-lion than an enraged woman; but these Greeks are afraid of nothing. Just listen to a specimen of the poetry of Hipponax:

"With how much justice does each loving dame
Her lord's affection for herself proclaim!
For twice—who doubts it?—she has favor in his eyes,
The day he weds her and the day she dies!"

"Cease, ribald, cease!" exclaimed Ladice, putting her fingers to her ears. "You see, Persians, what Amasis is; he can laugh and jest at one, and yet all the while be of the same opinion as the person he is making fun of. There is not a better husband than he in the kingdom."

"And not a worse wife than you," laughed Amasis; "you will bring upon me the suspicion of being hen-pecked. Farewell, children! And now it is quite time for the young men to see the sights of Sais."

In a few minutes the Persians, having said good-by to their hosts, took their departure from the palace, and started on a tour of inspection through the city with their interpreter, a Greek, who had been brought up in Egypt, and who understood both languages perfectly. The streets near the palace were wide and stately: the houses, many of which were five stories high, were covered with paintings and hieroglyphics. Balconies, guarded by balustrades of painted and carved wood, and supported by pillars, also painted, ran along the walls which faced the courtyard. On the closed doors of several houses the name and condition of the owner were to be read: on the flat roofs stood flowers and plants, among which the Egyptians loved to spend their evenings, whenever they did not feel disposed to make the ascent to the fly-tower, which was upon nearly all the houses. These little lookouts were built because the

annoying insects to which the Nile gives birth fly low, and at the height at which these structures were, one was safe from them.

The young Persians were pleased to see the great, the almost excessive cleanliness with which every house, even the streets themselves, shone. The knockers and the metal on the doors glittered in the sun; the paintings on the walls, balconies, and pillars seemed as if perfectly fresh, and even the pavements had the appearance of being daily scoured.

The farther the Persians went from the Nile and the palace, the more wretched became the streets of the city. Sais was built on the slope of a moderate sized hill, and had suddenly changed from an insignificant village to quite a large town since the time that the residence of the Pharaohs had been removed thither, two hundred and fifty years before. In the quarter of the city which looked towards the Nile, the streets were very beautiful, but on the other side of the hill, interspersed occasionally with houses of the better sort, lay the huts, built of Nile clay and wattled with Acacia-boughs, where the poor lived: at the northwest was the fortified palace of the king.

"Let us turn back," said Gyges, who had charge of his younger companions in the absence of his father, when he saw an inquisitive crowd following them, which grew larger at every step.

"Just as you command," answered the interpreter: "there, down at the foot of the hill, lies the burying-place of Sais; it is worth going to see."

"Go on, then," said Bartia; "our principal object in coming with Prexaspes was to see the marvels of the world."

When they reached an open place, surrounded by the booths of mechanics, they heard loud shouts from the crowd following them: the children shrieked for delight, the women gave vent to exclamations of wonder, when a voice, sounding above them all, cried,—

"Come into the court of the temple, and see the performances of the great wizard, who was born in an Oasis of Libya, and is gifted by Chunsu, the bestower

of good counsels, and by Thoth, the thrice great, with all magical powers."

"Follow me up to the little temple," said the interpreter, "and you will see a curious sight."

So he fought his way through the crowd, with the Persians close behind him, now pushing against a naked child, now against a tawny woman, and came back with a priest, who conducted the strangers into the court of the temple. Here stood a man in priestly robes between some boxes and chests; two Moors knelt near him on the earth. The Libyan, a gigantic man, with muscular limbs and piercing black eyes, held a wind-instrument, something like a clarinet, in his hand; around his breast and arms there twined several deadly poisonous snakes. As he stood opposite the Persians, he bowed low, and, with a solemn gesture, gave the invitation to the spectacle; then, laying aside his white garment, he began to play all sorts of tricks with his adders: now he would let them bite him, so that the blood trickled from his cheeks; now he compelled them, by peculiar sounds of his flute, to stand up and make a dancing movement; now he metamorphosed them, by spitting into their jaws, into lifeless sticks. Then he cast them all upon the ground, and danced furiously between them without touching them: he turned and twisted his flexible limbs with the fury of a maniac, till his eyes almost started from his head, and bloody froth showed itself on his lips. Suddenly he threw himself, as if dead, upon the ground; not a single part of his body moved, except his lips, which gave forth a hissing whistle: at this sign the snakes crept towards him and curled around his neck, body, and legs. At last he rose and sang a song about the wonderful power of the divinity who had made him, for her glory, a magician. Then he opened one of the chests and laid the greater part of the snakes in it, keeping only a few, probably his favorites, wrapped around his neck and arms.

As the second part of the show, he gave a few well-performed pieces of legerdemain: he swallowed burning flax, balanced swords whose points rested in the sockets of his eyes, drew long ribbons out of the noses of the Egyptian children, played the well-known cup-and-ball

game, and raised the superstitious wonder of the spectators to its climax, by conjuring out of five ostrich eggs as many young living rabbits.

The Persians by no means belonged to the unappreciative part of his audience; on the contrary, this unwonted spectacle made an intense impression upon their minds: it was as though they were in Wonder-Land itself. Of all the curiosities of Egypt, this seemed the most unheard of.

They went back, in silence, to the streets of the better class without at first noticing how many of the Egyptians who surrounded them were without hands, or had their noses or ears cut off. These mutilated creatures were no new sight to the Asiatics, for with them many crimes were punished by maiming, though upon making especial inquiry, they learned that in Egypt a convicted counterfeiter lost his hand; the woman without a nose was an adulteress; the man with his tongue cut out was a traitor or slanderer; the one with his ear gone was a spy; and yonder pale maniac was a child murderer, who, in expiation of her crime, had been compelled to carry in her arms, three days and nights, the body of her strangled baby. What woman, when these hours of torture were over, would be sane? Most of the punishments of the Egyptians had for their object both the checking of the crime and the rendering its repetition impossible.

They had not gone far, before their progress came to a stand-still, for an immense crowd had assembled in one of the fine streets leading to the temple of Neith, before a house whose few front windows were fastened with shutters. At the door stood a scolding old man, in the plain white dress of a priest's servant, who was trying to hinder the attempt of some others of his own station to carry a great chest out of the house.

"Who authorized you to rob my master?" he cried with angry gestures. "I am the guardian of this house, and my master before he was sent by the King to Persia, —may the gods destroy it!—commanded me to have especial care of this chest in which are his papers."

"Be easy, old Hib," said the temple-servant whose

acquaintance we made at the reception of the Asiatics; "the high-priest of Neith, your master's master, has sent us here. There must be some curious papers in the box, or Neithotep would not have honored us with this mission."

"But I will not suffer the property of my master, the great physician Nebenchari, to be stolen," shrieked the old man. "I will have justice if I have to go to the king."

"Now rest there," said the temple-servant: "that is right; now bring the chest out. Carry it at once to the high-priest. But as for you, old man, you had better be a little more prudent; hold your tongue, and remember that you, too, are a servant of my master the high-priest. See that you get back into the house, or else we'll drag you out to-morrow as we have done this chest to-day."

At these words he slammed the heavy door to, sending the old man reeling back into the house, and quickly disappeared.

The Persians had watched this strange scene, and asked their interpreter concerning it. Zopyrus laughed when he learned that the possessor of the chest confiscated by the all-powerful priests was the oculist who was residing in Persia on account of the diseased eyes of the queen-mother, and who, for his grave, morose character was little loved at the court of Cambyses. Bartia wanted to ask Amasis what this strange robbery meant, but Gyges told him not to trouble himself about things that did not concern him.

When they had nearly reached the castle, amid the quickly-falling darkness of Egypt, which was beginning to spread over the land, Gyges suddenly felt himself stopped by some unknown man who had seized him by the robe; he turned and saw that the stranger had put his finger on his lips in token of silence.

"When can I speak to you alone and unnoticed?" he whispered to the son of Cræsus.

"What do you want with me?"

"Question not, and answer quickly. By Mithra! I have serious matters to reveal."

"You speak Persian,—are you then not an Egyptian, as your dress would show?"

"I am a Persian; but answer quickly before our conversation is discovered. When can I speak to you without being observed?"

"To-morrow morning."

"That is too late."

"Then in a quarter of an hour, when it is entirely dark, at this gate of the palace."

"I will await you."

With these words the man disappeared.

Gyges, after his arrival in the castle, parted from Bar-tia and Zopyrus, and putting his sword into his belt, and telling Darius to do the same and to follow him, he stood, in a few moments, face to face with the stranger in the great portico.

"Auramazda be praised, you are here!" said the latter, in Persian, to the young Lydian. "But who is your companion?"

"My friend, a son of Achamenes, Darius, the child of Hystaspes."

The stranger bowed low, and said, "It is well; I feared that it was an Egyptian."

"No, we are alone, and will hear you; but be brief. Who are you, and what do you want?"

"My name is Bubares, and I was a captain under the great Cyrus. After we had taken Sardis, your father's city, we began to plunder, when your wise father told Cyrus that he ought to forbid it, for it would be only robbing himself: so then it was commanded that the soldiers should bring all booty to the captains; and these were ordered to have all the valuables that were brought them carried into the market. There lay piles of gold and silver vessels, whole heaps of men's and women's ornaments in precious stones."

"To the point, to the point; we have but little time," said Gyges, interrupting him.

"You are right, I must be brief. I forfeited my life by reserving to myself a glittering ointment-box set in jewels, which was in your father's palace. The king would have had me executed; Cræsus, however, by his

intercession, saved my life, and Cyrus pardoned me, but declared me forever dishonored. I could not, therefore, remain in Persia, for the disgrace lay too heavy upon me. A ship of Smyrna brought me to Cyprus. There I again enlisted, learned Greek and Egyptian, fought against Amasis, and was finally brought here by Phanes as prisoner of war. As I had always been in the cavalry, they made me one of the king's hostlers. I did well, and after six years I was made superintendent of the stables. I have never forgotten your father, or what I owe him. Now comes my turn to show him a kindness."

"It concerns my father, then? Speak, tell us."

"I will at once. Has Cræsus injured Prince Psamtic?"

"Not that I know of."

"Your father is this evening at the house of Rhodope, at Naucratis?"

"How do you know that?"

"I heard it from himself; for I followed him this morning to the boat to throw myself at his feet."

"And did you accomplish your object?"

"Oh, yes. He said a few gracious words, but he could not attend to me very long, for his companions had already taken their places in the boat. In the hurry his slave Sandon, whom I knew, said to me that they were going to visit a Greek woman called Rhodope, who lived at Naucratis."

"He told you truly."

"Then an immediate rescue is necessary. When the market was full, ten wagons and two boats, filled with Ethiopian soldiers, under the leadership of an Egyptian captain, started secretly for Naucratis in order to surround the house of Rhodope in the night and seize her guests."

"What treachery!" exclaimed Gyges.

"But what would they do to your father?" asked Darius. "They must know that Cambyses' vengeance——"

"I know nothing," repeated Bubares, "except that the country-house of Rhodope, in which your father is, is to be surrounded by Ethiopian soldiers. I myself attended to the harnessing of the horses, and I heard the torch-bearers of the prince say to the captain Pentaur, 'Keep

your ears and eyes open, have the house of Rhodope completely encircled, so that he shall not escape by the back door. Spare his life, if possible, and only kill him if he resists. If you bring him alive to Sais, you shall have twenty rings of gold."

"Can my father possibly be meant?"

"No one knows," murmured Bubares; "in this country anything is possible."

"How long will it take a swift horse to reach Naucratis?"

"Three hours, if he does not break down, and if the roads are not too much flooded."

"In two, then, I will be there."

"I will ride with you," said Darius.

"No, you must remain here with Zopyrus, for Bartia's protection. Order our servants to hold themselves ready."

"But, Gyges——"

"Do you stay here, and excuse me to Amasis. Say I cannot join the feast on account of headache, toothache, or any other ache you please. I will ride Bartia's Nyssean horse. Bubares, you follow me on that of Darius. You will lend it to me, my brother?"

"If I had ten thousand, you should have them."

"Do you know the way to Naucratis, Bubares?"

"As well as my eyes."

"Now go, Darius, and tell them to get ready Bartia's horse and yours. Every delay is a crime. Good-by, Darius, perhaps forever. Take care of Bartia; good-by."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ESCAPE.

Two hours before midnight there issued a bright light and the sound of voices from the open windows of the house of Rhodope. To-night her table was richly furnished forth in honor of Cræsus. On the cushions lay, crowned with poplar-leaves and roses, the well-known guests: Theodorus, Ibycus, Phanes, Aristomachus, the merchant Theopompus of Miletus, and several others.

"Yes, this Egypt," said Theodorus the sculptor, "seems to me like a girl with a golden shoe; however much it rubs and pinches her, she will not leave it off though she has within her reach good and comfortable ones, in which she might walk with ease and pleasure."

"You mean the iron conservatism of the Egyptians?" asked Cræsus.

"Certainly," answered the sculptor. "Two centuries ago Egypt was, beyond all doubt, the first country in the world; her arts and sciences excelled all that we could produce. We learned the knack from them, brought it to perfection, gave to stiff figures freedom and beauty, kept to no fixed measure, and have now left our teacher far behind us. And how is all this possible? Simply from the fact that the master, bound by inflexible laws, was stationary, while we were able to pursue power and beauty in the wide domain of art."

"But how can they compel the artist to make his works uniform when they represent so many different things?"

"Oh, that is easily explained; the Egyptians divide the whole human body into twenty-one and a quarter parts, and by this arrangement they preserve the relations of the different limbs to each other. I myself made a wager with Amasis, in the presence of the first Egyptian sculptor, a priest of Thebes, that I would write to my brother Telecles at Ephesus, giving him the

size, proportions, and arrangement after the Egyptian manner, and that he and I would make a statue, which seeming as if made by one hand and out of a single block although Telecles made the lower part at Ephesus and I the upper at Sais, I would put together before the eyes of Amasis himself."

This discussion on art led Phryxus to speak of the temple that was being built at Delphi and of the great sums necessary to its completion. When he had finished, Cræsus turned to him and said,—

"In comparison with earlier years, I am poor, Phryxus, but Cambyses does not let me starve, and I am able to contribute a talent to your building."

When the Delphian had thanked him, Phanes added, "The Alcæonides will make a beautiful work of it, for they are ambitious and rich, and are anxious to gain the favor of the Amphictyons in order that, supported by them, they may establish their tyranny permanently, outstrip my race, and control the government of the country."

"To the riches of this family you have contributed largely, Cræsus, they say, besides that which Agariste brought Megacles as her dowry?" said Ibycus.

"Yes, yes," laughed Cræsus.

"Tell me the story," asked Rhodope.

"Alcæon of Athens once came to my court, and the calm, cultured man pleased me, so I made him remain with me a long time. One day, when I showed him my treasure-room, he called himself a common beggar,—described what a happy life he should lead if he could have one grasp at these riches. I told him he might have as much gold as he could carry off with him. And what do you suppose he did? He put on great Lydian cavalry-boots, fastened an apron around his waist, and a basket on his back. This he filled with money, into his apron he piled as much gold as he could carry, he loaded his boots with coin, sprinkled gold dust in his hair and beard, even filled his mouth with gold, so that his cheeks looked as if he were in the act of being suffocated by a radish. In each hand he took a golden key and then crept out of the treasure-chamber bowed to the earth under his bur

den. Outside the door he broke down, and I never laughed so heartily in my life as that day."

"And you let him have the treasures?" asked Rhodope.

"Of course, my friend; I do not think I paid too dear for the experience of the way in which gold can make a fool of a wise man."

"You were the most lavish of princes," said Phanes. "And now I am a tolerably contented beggar; but tell me, Phryxus, how much has Amasis contributed to your fund?"

"He gave a thousand hundred-weight of alum."

"That is a princely gift."

"And the heir to the throne?"

"When I went to him and told him of his father's generosity, he laughed bitterly, and said, turning his back upon me, 'If you were raising money to pull your temple down, I would give twice as much as Amasis.'"

"Miserable fellow!"

"Say, rather, true Egyptian. Psamtic hates everything that does not take its origin in his own land."

"How much have the Greeks in Naucratis raised?"

"Besides the large contributions of private persons, each community subscribes twenty minæ."

"That is a great deal."

"Philoinus the Sybarite alone sent me a thousand drachmas, and accompanied them with an exceedingly peculiar letter. May I read it, Rhodope?"

"Of course, if you wish to," she answered.

"You will learn from it that the debauchee regrets his late behavior."

The Delphian took the roll from his breast and read: "Philoinus begs to inform Phryxus that he is sorry that he, the writer, did not drink more when he was lately with Rhodope,—that, had he done so, he would have been entirely besotted, and therefore not in a position to offend a fly; as it is, his cursed moderation is punished by exclusion from the best table in Egypt; that he is also grateful for the entertainment, and sends as a remembrance of the lordly haunch, for whose sake he intends to buy, at any price, the Thracian's cook, twelve large spits

for ox-roasting; these Phryxus may put in any of the treasuries of Delphi as a present from Rhodope. Philoinus himself subscribes, as he is a rich man, a thousand drachmas. At the next Pythian games he will have this offering published. To the churl, Aristomachus of Sparta, he commissions Phryxus to give his thanks for having promoted, so effectively, the object of his journey. He came here to have a decayed tooth taken out by an Egyptian doctor, who extracts teeth without much pain. And Aristomachus has, with one blow, disposed of the defective tooth, and spared him a fearful operation, at which he trembled. When he came to himself he found the three teeth knocked out in his mouth—the bad tooth and two good ones; in regard to these latter, it is to be considered that they might some day have caused him pain. He greets Rhodope and the handsome Phanes, through Phryxus, and hopes that the Delphian will dine with him this day a year: he has to send an early invitation on account of some small preparations that must always be made. This letter is written by his learned slave Sophotatus in the next room to him,—for it gives him cramps in the fingers only to see any one writing.”

All the guests burst out laughing, but Rhodope said,—

“This letter pleases me, for I see by it that Philoinus is not a bad man. Brought up a Sybarite——”

“Pardon me, sirs, if I disturb you; and you, gracious lady, for forcing my way, uninvited, into this quiet house.” With these words, a man unknown to Rhodope, who had entered unobserved by all, interrupted the conversation. “I am Gyges, son of Cræsus, and I have, not in jest, ridden in two hours from Sais to be here in time.”

“Menon, a cushion for our new guest,” said Rhodope. “Be heartily welcome in my house, and rest from your wild and truly Lydian ride.”

“By the Dog, Gyges!” said Cræsus, extending his hand to his son, “I don’t understand what brings you here at this late hour. I asked you not to leave Bartia’s side, who is my especial charge, and yet——But why do you look so? Has anything happened? Has any misfortune occurred?”

Gyges at first could not answer a word to his father's questions. It seemed as though he had a second time lost his speech. At last he recovered himself, and said,—

“The gods be praised, my dear father, that I find you safe. Do not think I left Bartia without good reason. I am forced to enter this joyful assembly as a bird of ill omen. Know, then, sirs, for I dare not waste time in coming to the point, that treachery and violence are awaiting you without.”

All sprang to their feet as if struck by a bolt from heaven; Aristomachus silently loosened his sword in its sheath; and Phanes stretched out his arm as if to find whether its old athletic strength still remained in it.

“What is it? What are they going to do to us?”

“This house is surrounded by Ethiopian soldiers; a trusty man has told me that the prince had ordered one among you to be carried off prisoner, and he commanded that the victim should be killed, if necessary. I feared for you, my father, and hastened hither. The man from whom I heard this did not lie; the house *is* surrounded. When I reached the gate of your garden, Rhodope, my horse shied in spite of his fatigue. I got off and saw in the moonlight, behind the bushes, the glitter of weapons and the shining eyes of concealed men. They allowed us, however, to enter the house undisturbed——”

“Listen, I have something important to tell!” exclaimed Cnacias, rushing into the room and interrupting Gyges. “When I went to get some water from the river for the mixing-bowl a man pushed against me, and had almost passed me, when I recognized him as an Ethiopian rower of Phanes. He told me he had dived out of the boat to take a bath in the Nile, when a royal vessel drew up to that of Phanes and asked the crew whom they served. ‘Phanes,’ answered the steersman. The royal boat went on its way slowly, without appearing to trouble itself about the vessel. The rower, however, clung on to its rudder in fun, and heard one Ethiopian soldier say to another, ‘Keep that boat well in view; we know now where the bird’s nest is, it will be easy to capture him. Remember Psamtis has promised us fifty gold rings if we bring the Athenian, alive or dead, to him.’ This, Sebek

the sailor, who has served you seven years, has just reported, Phanes."

With entire calmness the Athenian had listened to the story of Gyges and the slave. Rhodope trembled with fear, while Aristomachus exclaimed, "I'll not let a hair of your head be touched, and we can defy all Egypt." Cræsus advised caution. The whole company was in the greatest excitement.

At last Phanes broke the silence, saying, "Imminent danger requires careful counsel. It will be no easy matter to save me. The Egyptians will try to dispose of me without any disturbance. They knew that I intended to start in a Phocian trireme early in the morning for Sigeum, and they have no time to lose if they want to seize me. Your whole garden, Rhodope, is surrounded. If I stay here, you may be sure that they will no longer regard your dwelling as an asylum, but will search it and capture me. The Phocian ship that was to take me to my own people is, without doubt, watched as is this house. There shall be no needless blood spilled for my sake."

"But you are not going to surrender yourself!" exclaimed Aristomachus.

"I have it! I have it!" cried Theopompus of Miletus, suddenly. "To-morrow at sunrise a ship, with Egyptian grain, sails to Miletus, not from Naucratis but from Canopus. Take the horse of the noble Persian and ride thither; we will guard you on your way through the garden."

"Our unarmed company is not enough for such a purpose," answered Gyges. "We are but ten men in all, of whom but three have swords. *They* are at least a hundred, and armed to the teeth."

"And if you, Lydian, are ten times a coward, and they are twice a hundred, I will fight," said Aristomachus.

Phanes pressed his friend's hand.

Gyges turned pale,—a tried veteran had called him coward, nor could he find words to defend himself. Upon any great excitement his power over his tongue was lost; then, suddenly flushing, he said quickly and firmly,—

"Follow me, Athenian; and you, Spartan, who are

wont to weigh what you say, henceforward call no man coward till you know him well. Good-night, friends. Phanes is saved. Father, farewell."

The guests gazed in astonishment after the departing men. A short time after their disappearance, the listening company heard the sound as of horses galloping away; then, after a somewhat longer time, they heard a long-drawn whistle, and a cry for help, from the Nile.

"Where is Cnacias?" asked Rhodope of one of her slaves.

"He went into the garden with Phanes and the Persian."

At this moment the old servant entered, pale and trembling.

"Have you seen my son?" cried Cræsus to him.

"Where is Phanes?"

"Both send their greetings by me."

"Are they off, then?" "Where have they gone?"

"How is it possible?"

"Here in this side room," said the slave, "the Athenian and the Persian had a conversation,—then I had to undress them both: Phanes put on the coat and shoes of the stranger, and set, also, his pointed cap on his own head, while the Persian took the chiton and mantle of the Athenian, put the other's golden circlet on his forehead, shaved the hair from his upper lip, and commanded me to follow him into the garden. Phanes, whom any one would have taken for a Persian in his new dress, sprang upon the horse that was waiting at the gate. The stranger called out, 'Farewell, Gyges; Good-by, my Persian; pleasant voyage to you, Gyges.' The slave who held the horses rode after him; and, though in all the shrubbery I could hear the clang of weapons, no one obstructed the passage of the Athenian. They must have mistaken him for Gyges. When we stood again before the house, the stranger said to me, 'Now accompany me to the boat of Phanes, and fail not to call me by his name.' 'But the sailors might easily betray you,' I suggested. 'Go tell them to receive me as if I were Phanes, their commander.' I then asked him to let me take his place, and allow myself to be captured in his stead, in

the disguise of the Athenian, who had just escaped. He firmly refused this—and he was right in saying that my bearing would betray me as a slave.”

“What has become of my son?” demanded Cræsus.

“He refused my poor sacrifice, and entered the boat, after sending a thousand greetings to you, O king. I called after him, ‘Good luck be with you, Phanes—an easy journey to you, Phanes.’ A cloud passed over the moon, and it grew very dark. Suddenly I heard shrieks and cries for help, which lasted only a short time; then there sounded a piercing whistle, and after that I heard nothing but the regular beat of the oars. I was just about to run back to make a report to you of what had happened, when Sebek came swimming up again. He said that the Egyptians had evidently bored holes in the boat of Phanes, for when it was a little distance from land it sank; the sailors called for help, the royal vessel, which was following them, took on board the supposed Phanes as if they wished to save him, and prevented the sailors of the Athenian from climbing the sides of their vessel. The latter all sank with their boat, only Sebek, the bold swimmer, reached the shore. Gyges is in the royal boat; Phanes has escaped, for that whistle must have been the signal to the soldiers at the garden gate. When I searched the bushes on the road, before coming back, I did not find a man behind them; though I heard the rattling of the weapons and the talking of the soldiers on their way to Sais.”

The guests listened eagerly to the slave’s story. Cræsus quieted his anxieties with the thought of the friendship of Amasis, and the king’s fear of the Persians. A little while after he left the house of Rhodope to pass the night at that of Theopompus the Milesian.

“Greet Gyges from me,” said Aristomachus, as the old man was departing; “I beg his pardon, and tell him I would wish to have him as a friend, or, if he will not allow that, to meet him as an honorable enemy in the field.”

CHAPTER IX.

SAPPHO IN THE GARDEN.

THE sun of a new day had risen over Egypt. The thick dew which, on the shores of the Nile, took the place of rain, lay like emeralds and diamonds on the leaves and flowers. The sun was yet low in the east, and the fresh northwest wind stirred the morning air. Out of the house of Rhodope came two feminine figures, the slave Melitta, and Sappho, the granddaughter of the old Thracian. With light step the graceful girl ran through the garden; now she stooped to break off a rosebud, and scatter the dew, which lay on it, into the face of her old guardian, and then, with a clear and ringing laugh at her mischief, she fastened the rose in her breast and began singing:

“Cupid once upon a bed
Of roses laid his weary head:
Luckless urchin, not to see
Within the leaves a slumbering bee!
The bee awaked—with anger wild
The bee awaked, and stung the child.
Loud and piteous are his cries;
To Venus quick he runs, he flies:
‘Oh, mother! I am wounded through—
I die with pain—in sooth I do!
Stung by some little angry thing,
Some serpent on a tiny wing—
A bee it was—for once, I know,
I heard a rustic call it so.’”*

“Is not my song beautiful?” asked the girl. “And what a little fool that Eros was to take a bee for a winged

* The other lines, with the moral, are as follows:

“Thus he spoke, and she the while
Heard him with a soothing smile;
Then said, ‘My infant, if so much
Thou feel the little wild-bee’s touch,
How must the heart, ah, Cupid! be,
The hapless heart that’s stung by thee!’”

The rendering here given is the well-known one of Thomas Moore

snake! Grandmother says she knows another verse of this song which the great poet Anacreon wrote; but she will not teach it to me. Tell me, Melitta, what is there in that strophe—Why do you laugh? Please, dear Melitta, sing it to me,—or perhaps you do not know it. No? Then, of course, you cannot teach it.”

“It is an entirely new song,” answered the old woman, evading Sappho’s pertinacity, “and I only know the ballads of the good old times. But what is that? Did you not hear a knocking at the gate?”

“Yes, and I thought I heard the sound of horses’ hoofs on the road. There, it knocks again; see who it is that is asking admittance so early. Perhaps it is the good Phanes, who did not go away yesterday, and has come to say good-by.”

“Phanes has gone,” answered the old woman gravely, “and Rhodope has ordered me to send you into the house when visitors come. Go, child, while I open the gate; go, there is the knocking again.”

Sappho made a pretence of starting for the house; but, instead of minding her guardian’s directions, she hid herself behind a rose-bush, in order to see thence this early visitor. They had concealed from her the events of the preceding night, that she might not be made anxious, and she was accustomed at this early hour to see only her grandmother’s most intimate friends.

Melitta opened the garden-door and let in a richly-dressed, fair-haired youth. Sappho, dazzled by the foreign costume and the great beauty of the Persian prince,—for he was the early visitor,—did not move from her place, and could not take her eyes off him. She pictured him to herself as the golden-haired Apollo, the charioteer of the sun. Melitta and the stranger approached her hiding-place; but she put out her head between the roses to hear more plainly the youth who was talking in broken Greek to the old slave. She learned that he had come to ask about Cræsus and his son,—then she heard, for the first time, all that had happened the night before. She trembled for Phanes; she thanked the noble Gyges in her heart, and she asked herself who this regally-arrayed youth might be. Rhodope

had told her, indeed, of the glorious deeds of Cyrus, of the fall of Cræsus, of the power and the rule of the Persians; but she had always heard the Asiatics called a wild, rough people, and the longer she looked at the handsome Bartia, the more prepossessed she became in favor of the Persians.

When Melitta went to call her grandmother and announce the visitor, Sappho started to follow her; but Eros, mischievous boy, who in the last few minutes had been laughing at the childish unconsciousness of the maiden, willed it otherwise. Her robe caught in a thorn of the rose-bush, and, before she could free herself, the young Persian sprang to her side and helped the blushing girl to unfasten her dress from the treacherous bush. For a moment both were too much embarrassed to speak, one hardly more confused than the other. This silence lasted but a minute, for the maiden soon recovered herself, and with a laugh of childish delight at the dumb-struck stranger and the absurdity of the encounter, fled like a deer toward the house. But the Persian, too, soon regained his self-possession. With a few strides he caught up with her; quick as thought he seized her hand, and held it, in spite of all her struggles, firmly in his own.

"Let me go!" cried Sappho, half in earnest and half laughingly, as she raised her dark eyes to his face.

"Why should I?" he returned. "I plucked you from the rose-bush, and now I shall hold you fast till, instead of yourself, you give me your sister there in your bosom, to take as a remembrance with me to my far-away home."

"Please let me go," repeated Sappho; "till you loose my hand, I will not speak a word to you."

"Will you go, if I do?"

"Certainly not."

"Now, there you have your freedom; but you will give me your rose?"

"Yonder, on the bush, are some a great deal more beautiful,—take one of those. What can you want with this one?"

"I want it to remind me of the loveliest maiden I ever saw."

"Now I shall certainly not give it, for he who tells me I am beautiful or lovely means me harm, and he who calls me good, 'tis he who means me well."

"Why, who taught you that?"

"My grandmother Rhodope."

"Well, then, I tell you that you are the best of all the maidens in the world."

"How can you say that, when you don't know me at all? Oh, I am often very bad and disobedient. If I were good I should go into the house now, and not stay here talking to you. Grandmother has strictly forbidden me to remain in the garden when there are strangers there, and I am sure it is no loss, for I can make nothing of men who always talk about things I do not understand."

"You would like me, then, to go away?"

"Oh, no, I understand you very well, even though you do not talk as well as poor Phanes, for instance, who had to run away so miserably yesterday, as I heard Melitta say."

"Were you fond of him, then?"

"Fond of him? Oh, yes, he is high in my favor. When I was a little girl he used to bring me dolls and balls and games of nine-pins from Sais and Memphis; since I have grown up, he teaches me beautiful new songs, and when he went away he gave me a dear little Sicilian lapdog, that I am going to call Argos, because it is so white and can run so fast. In a few days I am to get another present from the good Phanes, for—now just see!—I was going to tell a dead secret. Grandmother ordered me particularly not to say anything about the little guests we are expecting; but it seems to me as if we had known each other a long time; and your eyes are so honest, I feel as if I could tell you anything. For, you know, except grandmother and Melitta, I have no one in the world to confide in; and I do not know how it is, but, somehow, though they love me so dearly, I don't think they always understand me, nor see why it is that this trifle or that can please me so much."

"That is because they are old. But have you no play-fellows, no companions of your own age, whom you love?"

"Not one,—there are many maidens in Naucratis; but

grandmother says that I must not ask for their company,—and as they do not want to come to us, I should not want to go to them.”

“Poor child, were you in Persia you would soon have a friend! I have a sister, Atossa she is called, who is as young and good and beautiful as you.”

“Oh, what a pity she did not come with you; but now you must tell me what shall I call you?”

“My name is Bartia.”

“Bartia?—what a curious name! Bartia, Bartia! Do you know I like that name very much? What is the name of the good son of Cræsus, who saved our Phanes so gallantly?”

“Gyges they call him; Darius, Zopyrus, and he are my best friends: we have sworn never to part, and to sacrifice our lives for each other, if it is necessary: that is the reason that I have hastened here in secret so early, in spite of all their entreaties, that I might assist Gyges in case he needed my help.”

“But your ride has been in vain?”

“No, by Mithra, it has not, for I have found you! But tell me now what is your name?”

“I am called Sappho.”

“A fair name; are you any relative of the poet whose beautiful songs Gyges has often sung to me?”

“Oh, yes; the tenth muse, or the Swan of Lesbos, as they call that Sappho, was the sister of my grandfather Charaxus. But your friend Gyges is a better master of Greek than you.”

“From a child, he learned Lydian and Greek together, and speaks them both equally fluently: he knows the Persian tongue too, perfectly; and, what is more, he has made himself master of all the Persian virtues.”

“What are the virtues that you consider the best?”

“First of all truth, then courage, then obedience. These three, together with reverence for the gods, have made us Persians what we are.”

“But I thought you had no gods?”

“Foolish child! who could live without the gods, without some higher ruler? Our deities do not reside, as yours, in images and temples: their abiding-place is the universal

world, and we worship them on the noblest of all altars, in the open air, on the tops of high hills; there we enter into the presence of Mithra, the mighty sun, and Auramazda, the pure life-giving light. The light is good and——”

“What is that? Oh, it is grandmother calling; I must go,” cried Sappho.

“Don’t leave me yet.”

“Obedience is a Persian virtue.”

“But my rose?”

“There, you have it.”

“And will you remember me?”

“Why should I not?”

“You will forgive, if I ask another favor of you?”

“Quick! quick! grandmother is calling again.”

“Take this star of diamonds as a remembrance of this hour.”

“Oh, I cannot.”

“But take it, do take it; my father gave it to me, as a prize, when I had killed the first bear with my own hand; it was the thing once dearest to me, but you shall have it now, as I know nothing dearer than you.”

The young man took the chain, with the star on it, from his breast, and tried to hang it around her neck. Sappho resisted; but Bartia, throwing his arm around her waist, kissed her forehead, called her his only love, and putting with kindly force the ornament around her neck, looked deep into the dark eyes of the trembling child.

Rhodope called for the third time. Sappho tore herself from his arms, started to fly to the house, but turning at Bartia’s beseeching call, said softly in answer to his question, “When can I see you again?”

“To-morrow morning at yonder rose-bush.”

“My ally, who held you fast for me?”

Rhodope received Bartia and told him as much of the fate of his friend as she knew; and then he rode back to Sais, and met on his way home his friends Darius and Zopyrus, who, when they had perceived his departure, had followed him. They little suspected that Bartia, instead of the dreaded fights and dangers he had anticipated, had won his first victory in love.

Croesus arrived at Sais a little while before the three friends; he went immediately to the king and told him without reserve and with entire truth all that had taken place the night before. Amasis expressed himself very much surprised at the conduct of his son, assured his friend that Gyges should be immediately set free, and seemed never tired of laughing and jesting at Psamtic's baffled vengeance. When Croesus left him, the prince was announced.

CHAPTER X.

AMASIS AND THE PRIESTS.

AMASIS received his son with ringing laughter, and exclaimed, without regarding the pale, agitated face of the prince, "Did I not tell you that it would not be such an easy task for a simple Egyptian to catch the Greek fox? I would have given ten cities of my kingdom if I could have been by when you recognized in your supposed fluent-tongued Athenian the stuttering Lydian."

Psamtic grew deadly pale and trembled with rage, as he answered in a suppressed voice,—

"Is it right, my father, that you should rejoice over the affront done to your son? Had it not been for Cambyses, this impudent Lydian, by the eternal gods, would have seen the light of the sun for the last time. But what do you care if your son is the butt of this pack of beggarly Greeks!"

"Do not abuse those who have shown themselves cleverer than yourself."

"Cleverer? cleverer? My plan was so fine and so cunningly devised that——"

"The finest tissues are the most easily torn."

"That the Greek scoundrel could not have escaped me, if, against all propriety, the ambassador of a foreign

power had not come to the rescue of this condemned criminal."

"You are wrong, my son; this is not a matter of the fulfilment of a judicial sentence, but of the success or failure of a personal revenge."

"Its instruments were the officers of the king, and therefore the least I must require in satisfaction is, that you will demand from the King of Persia the punishment of a man who has interfered, in such an uncalled-for manner, with the accomplishment of your commands. Such a crime will receive in Persia, where they bow to the will of the king as to that of the gods, its proper estimation. Cambyses owes us the chastisement of Gyges."

"I shall do no such thing, for I must acknowledge that I am heartily glad at the rescue of Phanes. Gyges has saved my soul from being stained with the guilt of innocent blood, and has prevented you from wreaking a miserable revenge upon a man to whom your father is under deep obligations."

"Then you will be silent to Cambyses about the transaction?"

"No; I shall put the whole affair to him, when I write, in a ridiculous light, as I well know how to do, and I will warn him at the same time against Phanes. I will tell him that this man, who has barely escaped our vengeance, will try in every way to stir up the Persians against us, and that we hope our son-in-law will close his ears to this slanderer. The friendship of Cræsus and Gyges will do more good to us than Phanes' hate will do harm."

"Is that all you have to say? Will you give me no satisfaction?"

"No; that is my final decision."

"Then tremble no longer at Phanes, but at another whom we hold in our hands, and who holds you in his."

"You threaten, then,—you wish to tear in pieces the agreement we made but yesterday? Psamtic! Psamtic! remember you stand in the presence of your father and your king."

"And do you remember that I am your son; for if you

compel me to forget that the gods made you my parent, by refusing me all assistance, then will I fight with my own weapons."

"I should like to learn what they are."

"I have no need to conceal them from you. Know then that I and my friends, the priests, have the oculist Nebenchari in our power." Amasis turned pale. "Before you could guess that Cambyses would sue for your daughter's hand, you sent this man to distant Persia, in order to keep far away from Egypt one who knew the real parentage of my so-called sister Nitetis. There he still is; and he will, at the slightest signal from the priesthood, tell the be-fooled Cambyses that you have had the audacity to send him for your own daughter, the child of your dethroned predecessor. All the physician's papers are in our possession; the most important of them is the letter in your handwriting, promising his father, the man mid-wife, a thousand gold rings if he will conceal from the priests that Nitetis springs from another family than your own."

"Who possesses these papers?" asked Amasis.

"The priests."

"And they speak by your mouth?"

"You say it."

"Repeat, then, what you require of me."

"Demand of Cambyses the punishment of Gyges, and give me full power to follow up the escaped Phanes."

"Is that all?"

"Swear to the priests that you will refuse to allow any new temples for the false gods of Greece to be built, and will command the erection of the shrine of Apollo at Memphis to be stopped."

"I expected this, for you have found a sharp weapon against me. I am ready to yield to the wishes of my enemies with whom you have allied yourself; but I make two conditions: first, I must have the letter which in my folly I wrote to the father of Nebenchari. Were I to let you have it, I should be no longer king, but the wretched puppet of these priestly intriguers."

"Your wish is granted; you shall have the writing if——"

“No second if,—and hear further. I will not fulfil your absurd wishes by asking for the punishment of Gyges. Now leave me, and never again appear in my presence till I send for you. I gained a son yesterday only to lose him to-day. Rise. I want no show of a humility and love which you never knew. If you need counsel and comfort, betake yourself to the priests, and see if they will fill a father’s place. Tell Neithotep, in whose hands you are as wax, that he has found at last the right means of forcing from me things I would before have refused him. To preserve Egypt’s greatness I have been ready hitherto to make every sacrifice; but I see that these priests will not hesitate to threaten me with the betrayal of our country if they may but accomplish their purposes. I tell you they are more dangerous enemies to it than the Persians. Look to it, look to it! This time I am baffled by your trickeries; for my fatherly weakness has brought danger upon Egypt. But henceforward, by the mighty Neith, I will show effectually that I am king, and the whole priesthood shall perish before one iota of my will shall fail. Be silent, and leave me.”

The prince withdrew, and it was a longer time on this occasion before the king could enter the presence of his guests with a smiling face.

Psamtic then went to the commander of the native troops, and ordered him to banish the Egyptian captain, the awkward instrument of his own futile vengeance, to the quarries of the Thebaid, and to send the Ethiopian soldiers to their home. Then he hastened to the high-priest of Neith, to communicate to him what he had exacted from the king. Neithotep shook his head thoughtfully at the threatening words of the king, and dismissed the prince after he had given him the usual moral lesson.

Psamtic departed to his own house. His baffled revenge, the ominous quarrel with his father, his fear of the aliens’ scorn, the consciousness of his dependence upon the priests, his belief in his ill-starred destiny, weighed upon his heart and darkened his spirit.

Once the husband of a fair wife and father of five blooming children, there were only left him now one

daughter and a little boy whom he dearly loved. To him was he now going, in the hope that in Necho's presence he could gain comfort and fresh courage. The blue eyes and laughing face of his son were the only things that could warm the cold heart of this wretched man.

"Where is my son?" he asked of the first servant that met him.

"The king has just sent for Prince Necho," answered the latter.

The chamberlain of the prince approached, handed him a sealed letter, and, bowing low, said, "From your father, the king."

Psamtic broke open in angry haste the yellow wax which bore the royal cipher, and read, "I have sent for your son that he may not grow up to be the blind instrument of the priests, and forget what he owes to himself and his country. I will see to his education myself, for the impressions of childhood will stamp his whole future. I have no objection to your seeing Necho, if you will send me word previously of your desire to do so." The prince bit his lips till the blood flowed, to hide his rage from the servants who were standing near. The wish of his father and king was, according to the Egyptian notion, as binding as the strictest command. A few moments he remained in thoughtful silence; then he called for the hunters, dogs, bows, and javelins, and getting into a light wagon, ordered the driver to take him to the marshland, that there in the chase he might forget his trouble of heart, and make the beasts suffer for his unwreaked vengeance.

Gyges was released soon after the interview of his father with the king, and was received with great delight by his companions. The Pharaoh seemed to wish, through his redoubled kindnesses, to atone for the captivity of his friend's son, for he gave Gyges, that very day, a costly wagon, with two splendid brown horses, and a beautifully carved draughts-board, to take with him to Persia as a remembrance of Sais: the pieces of the set were made of ebony and ivory; on some were written maxims in hieroglyphics of gold and silver. Amasis laughed with his guests over the cunning of Gyges,

allowed the young Persians unreserved intercourse with his family, and treated them as his own sons. It was only at the feasts that he showed that the Egyptian was not entirely lost in him, for he made them eat at a separate table; he would, after the belief of his fathers, have thought himself defiled, if he had taken his meal at the same board with foreigners.

When, finally, Amasis declared, three days after this, that his daughter Nitetis would be ready in two weeks for her departure to Asia, all the Persians were sorry that their stay in Egypt was to end. Cræsus delighted himself much in the society of the poet and the sculptor of Samos, and Gyges shared in his father's preference for the Hellenic artists. Darius, who had occupied himself with astronomy at Babylon, was one evening invited by the high-priest, with most unaccountable civility, to follow him to the roof of the temple. The young man, thirsting for knowledge, did not have to be asked twice, and gained fresh learning as he listened to the nightly lessons of the old man. Psamtic, meeting this foreigner once in his master's house, asked Neithotep, when Darius had gone, how he could bring himself to initiate the Persian in the Egyptian mysteries.

"I only teach him," answered the high-priest, "those things that every learned Chaldean at Babylon knows as thoroughly as we, and in this way I make a friend of one whose stars outshine those of Cambyses, as the sun does the moon. This Darius, I tell you, will one day be a mighty ruler. I have seen his planet shine even over Egypt; it is the wise man's part not to tarry in the present, but to look forth into the future."

To Bartia these nightly studies of his friend were very welcome, for they caused Darius to sleep later, and this made his own secret morning-rides to Naucratis all the easier. Zopyrus, whom he had taken into his confidence, was accustomed to accompany him. Whilst he was with Sappho, his friend would occupy himself in hunting the jerboa, snipe, or jackal. When they returned, they would pretend to their mentor, Cræsus, that the object of these early excursions was the chase, the Persians' favorite occupation. No one but Tachot, who was made

utterly wretched by the young man's coldness, noticed the change in Bartia, and to Nitetis she told her troubles; her sister tried to do away with her depression, and would build for her beautiful castles in the air, and describe how happy would be for them a life together in Persia.

Melitta, the old slave of Rhodope, had been chosen by the lovers for their guardian, for she had surprised Bartia and Sappho together one morning, but, having received a generous gift from the prince, and being bewitched by his beauty, and entreated and coaxed and wheedled by her darling, she promised to reveal nothing to her mistress, and even went so far as to give every possible assistance to the young people. The old nurse looked upon "her own little daughter" as already mistress of the whole world, and would call her when they were alone "princess" and "queen," and in weaker moments, even fancied herself a high dignitary at the Persian court.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DISCOVERY AND THE PARTING.

THREE days before the departure of Nitetis, Rhodope had invited a large number of guests, among whom were Cræsus and Gyges, to a dinner at Naucratis. During the banquet, guarded by the night and the old slave, the two lovers were to meet in the garden. When Melitta had made perfectly sure that the conversation at table was in full progress, she opened the gate and let the young prince in, and then took herself away, agreeing to warn them by clapping her hands if any one approached.

"For only three days more can I feel that you are near me," whispered Sappho.

"Do you know that it sometimes seems to me as if I had seen you yesterday for the first time; but, generally,

I feel as though you had belonged to me for an eternity, and that I had loved you as long as I have lived?"

"And I feel that I have been yours always, and I cannot believe that I have ever lived without you."

"Oh, if the time of separation were but over!"

"Never fear, it will pass sooner than you think; waiting will be long, very long to us; but when once we are together again, it will be as though we had never parted; thus it has been with me, every day,—all the day have I longed for morning and you, but when it had come, and you were sitting by me, methought I had never left you."

"And yet I have a strange dread when I think of the hour of parting."

"I fear it not so very much; my heart will bleed when I say farewell, but I know you will not forget me. Melitta wanted to ask an oracle whether you will be true or not; it is an old woman who came from among the Phrygians, and who can prophesy by means of weaving threads at night; she uses, besides, for purification, incense, styrax, moon-shaped cakes and the leaves of the wild thorn; but I forbade Melitta, for my heart foretells better than Pythia from the threads, or the smoke of the sacrifice, that you will be true to me and will love me always."

"And your trust will never deceive you."

"But I have had some fears. I have blown, as the maidens do, upon a poppy-leaf and struck upon it; if it sounded, then I must rejoice, and if it tore without any noise, then I would have been sad; but almost always it gave the joyful answer, and I got from it far more gladness than sorrow."

"And may it always be so."

"Yes, it always must be so; but speak softly, for there goes Cnacias to the Nile for water."

"Yes, I will speak softly: now let me push back your silken hair while I whisper in your ear 'I love you.' Can you understand me?"

"One hears easily what one wants to hear,' my grandmother tells me. Even if you had shouted in my ear 'I hate you,' your looks would still have cried with a hun-

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dred voices that you loved me. The mute voice of the eye tells more than all the lips in the world."

"Could I only speak the fair Hellenic tongue better, I would——"

"Oh, I am glad you speak it just as you do, for then you could tell me all you feel, and you would look with less of tenderness into my eyes. And what are words? Do you hear the nightingale yonder? she has no language but her song, and yet I understand her."

"Tell it to me then. I should like to know what the bulbul, as we Persians call it, is saying to her love. Will you betray what the bird is speaking?"

"I will tell it to you softly. Philomel is singing to her spouse 'I give you my love,' and his answer—don't you hear?—is 'Itys, ito, itys.'"

"And what does ito, ito, mean?"

"It means, 'I take it, I take it.'"

"And itys?"

"That requires a learned explanation. Itys is a circle; the circle signifies eternity, for it has no beginning and no end. And so the nightingale says, 'I take it, I take it, for all eternity.' And if you were to say, 'I love you;' then I would answer, like the singer of the night, 'I take it, for to-day, for to-morrow, and for all eternity.'"

"How lovely the night is! what peace and silence all around! I do not even hear the nightingale. She is tarrying still up yonder in the acacia-trees, which are filling the air with the perfume of their blossoms. The palm-tops are looking at themselves mirrored in the Nile, and between them glimmers the moon like a white swan."

"Yes; its rays seem to throw a net of silver thread over all the earth, which lies like a captive woman in deep and motionless sleep. Happy as I am, I cannot laugh; still less talk aloud."

"Then speak in whispers, or sing."

"Yes, yes, give me my lute; let me lay my head upon your breast, while I sing to you a quiet song of peace. Alcmenes the Lydian, who lived in Sparta, composed it in honor of the calm, soft night. Now listen, for this gentle cradle-song must flow in murmurs from the lips.

Kiss me no more ; yes, kiss me when I have done, for thanks.

“ Upon the mountain-tops the night has fallen,
The cliff no longer striveth with the restless waves,
The deep defiles are lying hid in darkness,
The slow blind worm hath crept into his hole.

The wild beasts of the wood are crouched in rest,
Within the rose's heart the bee is sleeping,
Beneath the purple sea no monsters stir,
The birds at last their weary wings have folded
And all is still.”

“ Now, loved one, my kiss. I forgot the kisses for listening, as before I had forgotten the listening for the kisses.”

“ Now, is not my song beautiful ?”

“ As are all you sing.”

“ And all the great Hellenic poets write.”

“ And that is true also.”

“ Have you Persians no singers ?”

“ How can you ask that ? can a people live and be noble without song ?”

“ But you have such evil customs.”

“ What ?”

“ You take so many wives.”

“ My Sappho !”

“ Don't think me exacting toward you ; I only ask, before others come to share my place, for two or three years that I alone may be yours. Will you agree to that, Bartia ?”

“ Yes, will I.”

“ And then, when my time is past, and when you will have to yield to your country's custom, for out of love to me you would never of yourself willingly bring home a second wife, then let me be your first slave. I have made such a beautiful picture of it all to myself : when you go into the battle, I will put the tiara on your head, I will gird the sword upon your side, and give the spears into your hand ; when you come home conqueror, I will be the first to crown you ; when you ride to the chase, I will fasten on your spurs ; and when you go to the feast,

I will adorn and anoint you, and wind the wreaths of rose and poplar around your forehead and upon your shoulders. If you are wounded, I will nurse you; if you are sick, I will never leave your side; if you are happy, then I will leave you, and think, far away, of your honor and your happiness; and, perhaps, you will call me to yourself again, and tell me you love me yet, and will forever love me."

"Do not fear, my Sappho; my father had a hundred slaves, and but one wife, my mother, Cassandane."

"And I will be your Cassandane."

"No, dearest; for what you are to me, no wife ever yet was to her husband."

"When will you come and take me?"

"As soon as I can."

"And I will wait in patience."

"And shall I always hear news of you?"

"Oh, I will write you long, long letters; and give to the winds a thousand greetings for you."

"Yes, my darling, do so; and send the letters to the messenger who will from time to time bring Nitetis news from Egypt."

"But where shall I find him?"

"Let Melitta attend to that for——"

"Hark! what was that? Melitta clapped her hands. Good-by; you must go,—we shall soon meet again. Good-by."

Melitta, overpowered by fatigue, had fallen asleep; but at last she was aroused from her dreams by loud noises; she clapped her hands at once to warn the lovers, and to summon Sappho; for she saw by the stars that it was not far from morning. When the old woman approached the house, she perceived that the noise which had wakened her was caused by the breaking up of the party. In the greatest haste she pushed the frightened girl through a back door into the house, took her to her room, and was beginning to undress her, when Rhodope entered.

"Still out of bed, Sappho?" she asked. "What does it mean?"

Melitta trembled, and had a lie ready on her lips, when Sappho threw herself on her grandmother's bosom; and, embracing her tenderly, told her the whole story. Rhodope turned pale; bidding the slave leave them, she stood before her granddaughter, and laying her hands upon the child's shoulder, said,—

“Raise your eyes to mine, Sappho; can you look at me as calmly, with the same childlike purity, as before the coming of this young Persian?”

The maiden looked up to her grandmother with such an expression of innocence and happiness, that Rhodope drew her to her breast. “Since the time that you have been no longer a child, I have tried to keep from you all love-making. I would have chosen for you myself, after the Greek custom, a suitable husband, and have given you to him; but the gods have willed otherwise. Eros laughs at all the bars that men can raise against him; and the heart of your Lesbian ancestors beats in your breast. I cannot alter what has happened; so keep, then, the happy hours of your first love as a precious treasure in the shrine of your remembrance; to every one, sooner or later, the present becomes so desolate that but for these bright memories we should be wretched indeed. Think when you are quiet and alone of this fair boy, and say good-by to him when he returns to his home, but do not hope to see him again. The disposition of the Persians is light and changeable; everything new charms them; all that is strange they welcome with open arms. Your gentle, graceful nature has pleased this king's son: he loves you now; but he is young, fair, courted on every side, and withal a Persian. Give him up, that he may not give you up.”

“How can I? Have I not promised to be true to him to all eternity?”

“You children play with eternity as if it were a moment: so far as the vow is concerned, I blame it; but I am glad that you hold to it, for I abhor the cynical proverb that ‘at lovers’ perjuries Jove laughs.’”

“I must believe in Bartia, grandmother, for if I had never trusted him, do you think he would have become my friend? And besides, the Persians think truth the

greatest virtue, and so I believe that he will keep his vow and also make me his only wife."

"And if he forgets it, will you let your youth pass away in sorrow and useless repining?"

"Oh, dear, good grandmother, do not say such terrible things; if you but knew him as I know him, you would rejoice with me, and confess that my Bartia would never deceive me."

The maiden spoke these words with such happy confidence, with such certainty of conviction, and her dark eyes, filled with tears, looked so bright and joyous, that the old woman's face grew softer. Sappho threw her arms once more round the neck of her grandmother, and told her every word her lover had said to her, and ended with,—

"Oh, grandmother, I am so happy, so happy, and if you will only go with us to Persia, I will have nothing more to ask of the immortals."

"Only too soon," sighed Rhodope, "will your arms be again stretched out to them. Go to bed now, my child, and pray with me that it may all yet have a happy end. To-morrow I will consult Cræsus, and upon his decision will everything depend. Now, good-night, my darling: your old grandmother watches over you."

The next day she told Cræsus of the whole love-affair, and of the parentage of Sappho, suggesting that, after all, a child's rank depends upon its father and not its mother, and that though she herself was a slave, Charaxus was a noble. Cræsus told her that in Persia such marriages were not uncommon; but that Cassandane and Cambyses had higher views for the prince: still, he gave reason to hope that the wishes of the young lovers would not be disappointed, and promised her all the assistance in his power to accomplish this marriage, and his protection of Sappho against the intrigues of the Persian seraglio, should the union take place.

Before their conversation was over, Bartia was announced, and, soon after, Sappho; the final parting between the young lovers took place in the presence of their old friends, and full of sorrow and tenderness it

was, but not without joy for the past and hope for the future.

Three days later an immense crowd of the city populace again surged to and fro on the landing-place at Sais. The people had assembled to bid a last farewell to the departing daughter of the king. In this hour, in spite of the priests, the Egyptians showed the love they felt for the royal house. When Amasis and Ladice embraced Nitetis with tears for the last time, when Tachot, in sight of all the people, threw herself sobbing on her sister's neck, and when finally the royal boat left the shore, there were few dry eyes in the vast assembly, save only those of the priests, who looked down, cold and grave as ever, upon the moving scene.

When the ships of the foreigners, with their sails filled out by the south wind, floated slowly down the Nile, they did not depart without accompanying curses and maledictions from the Egyptian throng.

Tachot, waving her white veil as a signal to the departing ones, wept unceasingly. Were those tears for the playmate of her youth, or were they for the handsome prince? Who shall say?

In sight of all the people, Amasis embraced his wife and his daughter; he held up his grandson, the little Necho, whose appearance was a signal for shouts of joy. Psamtic, the child's father, stood silent and unmoved near the king, who seemed not to notice him. At last, Neithotep approached and led the prince reluctantly to Amasis, and, laying the son's hand in that of his father, he called down the blessing of heaven on the royal house. During his prayer the Egyptians knelt, with their hands raised to heaven.

Amasis drew his son to his breast, and whispered to the high-priest, when the latter had finished his prayer, "Let us keep the peace, for our own and for Egypt's sake."

"Have you received the letter of Nebenchari?"

"A Samian pirate-ship pursues the trireme of Phanes."

"Yonder goes the child of your predecessor, the rightful heir of Egypt's throne, unhindered, to the foreign country."

“The building of the Greek temple at Memphis shall be stopped.”

“Isis give us peace, and may happiness and prosperity spread over Egypt!”

At Naucratis the Greek denizens of the country had prepared a feast in honor of the departure of their protector's daughter. On the altars of the Greek gods were countless sacrifices offered; and when the Nile-boats landed in the harbor there burst out a loud “*Ailinos!*” Gaily-dressed virgins brought Nitetis a gold circlet which, as a bridal-wreath, was covered with hundreds of sweet violets. As the most beautiful in Naucratis, Sappho was to give it. Nitetis took her gift, kissing her forehead as she did so. The rowers bent to their work, and began the celeusma, the boat-song to whose time they pulled the oars. The south wind bellied out the sails, and a thousandfold *Ailinos* rang out a second time. Bartia waved his last farewells from the deck of the royal ship. Sappho prayed softly to Aphrodite Euploia, the goddess of ships. She smiled through her tears, while poor Melitta, who held a sunshade over her, wept in despair. When a few leaves floated down from her darling's wreath, the old slave forgot her troubles for a moment, while she softly whispered,—

“Yes, my child, any one can see you are in love; when a maiden loses leaves from her wreath, it is a sure sign that the arrow of Eros is in her heart.”

CHAPTER XII.

THE JOURNEY TO BABYLON.

SEVEN weeks later, there passed along the great highway which entered Babylon from the west, a long train of wagons, and riders of various descriptions, on their way to the gigantic city, which could be seen in the far horizon. In a covered "harmamaxa," as it was called, whose top was held up by wooden supports, sat Nitetis, the Egyptian king's daughter. The four-wheeled carriage was heavily gilded, and was filled with cushions of gold brocade. On its sides hung curtains, which could be drawn so as to keep out the sun and wind, or hide those within from observation.

Alongside of the wagon rode her protectors, our friends the three young Persians, the dethroned King of Lydia and his son. Fifty other vehicles and six hundred sumpter-horses followed them, while a division of well-mounted Persian soldiers went before. The road ran along the Euphrates, through rich fields of wheat, barley, and sesame, which bore two-hundred-, and sometimes even three-hundredfold. Slender date-palms, full of golden fruit, stood in all the meadows, which were crossed in every direction by ditches and canals.

Though it was winter, the sun shone warm and clear from a cloudless heaven. The mighty stream was alive with boats of every size, bringing the produce of the Armenian highlands to the plain of Mesopotamia, and carrying from Thapsacus to Babylon nearly all the merchandise that came from Greece and Asia Minor. Pumps and water-wheels poured the water of the river upon the fields and plantations on its banks, which were dotted with numberless villages. Everything showed that one was approaching the centre of an ancient, carefully cultivated, agricultural country.

In front of a long brick house, covered with black bitumen, standing in the midst of a grove of plantains,

the carriage and suite of Nitetis came to a halt. Cræsus alighted from his horse, and approached the wagon in which the princess was, and said to her,—

“We have arrived at length at our last stopping-place. Yonder high tower, whose outline you see on the horizon, is the renowned temple of Bel, which, next to the Pyramids, is the most immense of the works of men’s hands. Before the sun sets we shall enter the brazen gates of Babylon. Let me help you from the carriage, and send your servants to you. When you are in the house, you will have to dress yourself to-day after the manner of the Persian princesses, that so you may please the eyes of the king, for in a few hours you will stand in the presence of your husband.”

Nitetis thanked the old man, kissing him on the mouth like a loving daughter. When she entered the courtyard of the gloomy house, a man, followed by a crowd of Asiatic servant-women, approached her. Chief of the captains of the eunuchs, the most distinguished of the officers of the Persian court, he was tall and corpulent. His beardless face wore a leering smile; in his ears hung costly ear-rings; his arms, legs, and neck, and even his effeminately long robes, were covered with golden chains and rings; and his stiff bristling hair, over which was wound a purple cloth, reeked with sharp, penetrating perfumes.

Boges, for such was the eunuch’s name, bowed low before the Egyptian maiden, and said, holding his fat hand, covered with rings, before his mouth,—

“Cambyses, ruler of the world, sends me to you, O queen, that I may refresh your heart with the dew of his greeting. He sends also by me, the poorest of his servants, dresses of the Persian women that, as befits the spouse of the mightiest of kings, you may draw near the gates of Jamshid in the garments of a Mede. These women, your servants, await your commands. From an Egyptian diamond they will make you a pearl of Persia.”

Then appeared the host of the inn, and offered the princess a basket full of fruit, arranged with much taste.

Nitetis thanked both the men with friendly words, and entering the house sorrowfully, stripped off the dress of

her country, untwisted the thick tress on the left side of her head, the mark of an Egyptian princess, and then allowed the hands of strangers to array her in the costume of the alien. Her companions had, in the mean time, ordered the lunch to be served. Active servants brought chairs, tables, and golden vessels from the wagons; the cooks busied themselves, and were so ready in assisting each other that soon the tables were spread in festal splendor, and adorned with flowers, and what seemed like a fairy banquet stood ready for the hungry travellers.

The same luxury they had enjoyed during the whole of their long journey, for on the sumpter-horses was every possible thing that could minister to their comfort, from a water-proof tent, embroidered in gold, down to a footstool of silver; and in the baggage-wagons, with bakers, cooks, butlers, and carvers, were anointers, wreath-makers, and barbers. There was, besides, on the road, at every twentieth mile, an inn for travellers. Here were the exhausted horses changed for fresh relays, and here shady groves offered a refuge from the mid-day heat; and on the mountain-tops there were warm hearths for those who had been toiling through the ice and snow. These relay-houses were originated by the great Cyrus, who thus sought to shorten the immense distances of his vast empire. He had also instituted a regular postal service: at every station the mail-carrier would find another with a fresh horse, who, after he had received the letters, galloped at full speed to the next point; and so on till the destination was reached. These messengers were called "Angari," and were reputed the fastest riders in the world.

When the party, which included Boges the eunuch, had risen from the table, the door was again opened. A prolonged murmur of admiration was heard when Nitetis appeared before the Persians in the rich dress of the Median court, proud in the consciousness of her regal beauty, and blushing at the admiration of her friends. Involuntarily the servants prostrated themselves upon the ground before her, after the Asiatic custom, and the noble Achæmenides bowed low and respectfully. It was as if the king's daughter, with the simple costume of her

home, had also laid aside her timidity, and with the gold and precious stones of the full silken garments of the Persian princes, had clothed herself in the majesty of a queen.

The profound respect they paid seemed to please her, for, motioning graciously with her hand, she thanked her friends, and, turning to the captain of the eunuchs, she said kindly but proudly,—

“Thou hast done thy duty; I am well satisfied with the robes, and with the slaves thou hast brought me. I will not fail to commend thy care to my husband; and in the mean time take this golden chain as a token of my thanks.”

The all-powerful overseer of the royal seraglio kissed the hem of her garment, and received her gift in silence. Such dignity as this was something new to him; for all the wives of Cambyses, being women of Asia, and knowing the influence of the eunuch, were accustomed to try by every kind of servility and flattery to win his grudgingly granted favor.

Again Boges bowed, but Nitetis, without further noticing him, turned to Cræsus, and said,—

“You, kind friend, neither by words nor gifts can I reward for all you have done for me; I shall owe it to you if my life, even if not happy, be at least peaceful. Take this ring which, since my departure from Egypt, has never left my hand; its value is small, but its significance great. Pythagoras the Greek gave it to my mother when he was in Egypt, learning philosophy from the priests. She gave it to me when I took farewell of my home. On the simple stone there is a seven: this indivisible number symbolizes the health of body and soul, for nothing is more truly indivisible than health. If the smallest part of the body suffers, the whole man is sick; if one evil thought hides in the heart, all the harmony of the soul is made discord. May this seven recall to you, as often as you see it, my wishes for your complete untroubled enjoyment of bodily health, and a long continuance of that calmness of spirit that makes you the best, and therefore the happiest, of men. No thanks, my father: I should be still your debtor, even if I could give

to Cræsus the riches of Cræsus. Gyges, do you take this Lydian lyre of ebony, and when you sound its strings, think of the giver. To you, Zopyrus, I give this golden chain; you are, as I have seen, the faithful friend of my friends. We Egyptians offer to our goddess of love and friendship, the beautiful Hathor, as a symbol of her uniting power, ribbons and chains. To you, Darius, the lover of Egyptian wisdom, and of the starry heavens, this golden circle, on which you will see the zodiac artistically engraved. You, Bartia, my dear brother, shall have the costliest jewel that is mine. Take this amulet of lapis-lazuli; my sister Tachot hung it around my neck when I gave her my last good-night kiss. She told me that this talisman would give the wearer of it success in love. She wept then, Bartia. Of whom she was thinking I know not; but I trust that I obey her wishes when I lay it in your hands. Fancy that Tachot is giving it to you through me, her sister, and think often of our games in the garden at Sais."

Up to this point she had spoken Greek. Now, turning to the servants who were standing at a respectful distance, she said, in broken Persian,—

"To you, also, I give my thanks. At Babylon you shall receive a thousand staters. I command you, Boges," she added, turning to the eunuch, "to distribute this sum among them to-morrow at the latest. Lead me to the carriage, Cræsus."

The old man hastened to obey her command, and on their way Nitetis whispered,—

"Are you satisfied with me, my father?"

"I tell you, maiden, that after the queen-mother, you will be the first at this court; for on your brow sits majesty enthroned, and on your lips the graciousness that makes small gifts rich. To give and receive costly presents is the custom of the Persians. They understand how to enrich one another: you will teach them how to make each other happy. How fair you are, my child! But look! Do you see that cloud of dust rolling hither from the city? It is Cambyses coming to meet you. Hold yourself erect, maiden. Above all, do not fear your husband's look, or turn away; if you can but gaze

calmly and quietly in his face, you have conquered. Courage, courage, my daughter! Aphrodite adorn you with her fairest beauty! To horse, my friends! the king is coming."

Nitetis sat upright in the golden carriage, pressing her hands to her heart. The cloud of dust came nearer and nearer. From it there glittered rays of sunlight which caught on the spear-points and the armor of the warriors, and looked like the flashes from a stormy sky. The cloud opened, and a few figures could be seen; the whole procession disappeared behind the trees, at a turn of the road, and then in a few minutes all could see the riders galloping towards them,—a long motley train of horses and men, in purple, silver, and gold. More than two hundred horsemen on the white steeds of Nysea, whose bridles and housings were covered with bells and bosses, with feathers, tassels, and embroidery, followed a man mounted on a coal-black stallion, which reared and vaulted under the iron hand of its master. The rider wore a scarlet and white robe, embroidered with silver eagles and falcons. His pantaloons were of purple cloth, and his boots of yellow leather. Around his waist was wound a golden girdle, in which hung a short dagger-like sword, its handle and sheath studded with jewels. The splendor of his dress resembled that of Bartia. His tiara, too, was enveloped in the blue and white folds which betokened a son of Achæmenes. From beneath it curled his thick jet-black hair. An immense beard of the same color covered the lower part of his face. His features were pale and inflexible: his eyes, black as his hair and beard, burned with a fierce light. A deep scar, red as fire, the sabre-cut of a Massagetic warrior, furrowed the high forehead, the large hooked nose and thin lips of the rider; his whole bearing showed immense strength and boundless pride.

Nitetis could not take her eyes from his face: one like him she had never seen, and she felt herself strangely attracted. She thought she saw in that defiant, haughty face all that was noble in man; it seemed as if all the world, and most of all herself, were made but to serve

him. She knew not whether it was the terrible Seth, the father of evil, or the giver of all light, the mighty Ammon, that stood before her. Over her face, like the lights and shadows of the mid-day heaven, passed flushes and pallor; though she forgot the lessons of her friend, yet, when Cambyses drew up his furious horse by her carriage, she kept gazing into the gloomy eyes of him whom she felt to be the king.

His look softened when he saw how well she bore his scrutiny, and he waved a welcome to her with his hand, and rode up to her company, who had sprung from their horses; some prostrating themselves before him in the dust, and others bowing low with their hands hidden, after the Persian manner, in the sleeves of their robes. He leaped from his horse, followed by his suite; the servants spread out a heavy purple carpet on the road, that the king's feet might not be defiled by the dust; and then Cambyses greeted his friends and relatives, whom he allowed to kiss him on the mouth. Shaking Cræsus by the hand, he ordered him to mount his horse again and be an interpreter between Nitetis and himself.

The nobles highest in rank sprang to the king's side, lifted him upon his horse, and at a sign from him, the whole procession set itself again in motion.

"She is beautiful, and is pleasing to my heart," he said to Cræsus. "Interpret for me faithfully what answers she makes: I know only the Persian, the Assyrian, and Median tongues."

A strange delight filled Nitetis at these words, for she understood them, and before Cræsus could answer, she said gently, in broken Persian, "How much I ought to thank the gods that have made me find this favor in your sight. I am not ignorant of the language of my lord; this old man has instructed me in the Persian tongue, during our long journey. Pardon your servant that she speaks in stammering sentences, for the lesson was so short, and the understanding only that of a poor, unlearned girl."

Cambyses, though so grave, smiled; his vanity was flattered at the anxiety of Nitetis to win his favor, and a woman's industry seemed to the Persian, who was

used to see them grow up in ignorance, idleness, and caring for naught but dress and intrigue, as wonderful as it was admirable. He answered her with visible satisfaction:

"It pleases me that I can speak with you without a go-between; continue your efforts to learn the beautiful language of my fathers, and Cræsus shall still be your teacher."

"You make me happy by this commission," answered the old man. "I could have no more grateful and ambitious scholar than the daughter of Amasis."

"She confirms the fame of Egyptian wisdom, and I think she will soon understand and take into her soul the lessons of the Magi, who will instruct her in our religion."

Nitetis looked down, for what she had dreaded was now approaching. Instead of the Egyptian, she would have henceforward to serve strange gods.

Cambyses, not noticing her emotion, continued: "My mother, Cassandane, will initiate you in all the duties of my wives. I myself will take you to her to-morrow. I repeat to you what you have just artlessly listened to. You are well-pleasing to my heart; see that you lose not this favor; we will try to make our home pleasant to you, and as your friend I advise you to pay great consideration to Boges: you will have to obey him in many things, since he is the ruler of the seraglio."

"Ruler of the seraglio he may be," answered Nitetis, "but to your spouse no mortal but yourself can give commands. Nod, and I will obey; but remember that I am a king's daughter, and in my breast swells the same pride that I see flashing from your eyes, my lord and husband. You, the mighty one, my king, my spouse, I will follow as a slave; as little would I stoop to seek the favor of your hired servant, who of all men is least a man, as I would obey his commands when he gave them."

The pleasure and astonishment of the king increased. Never before, with the exception of his mother, had he heard a woman speak in this fashion, and the tact with which Nitetis acknowledged and exalted his power over

her very life, appeased his self-love: pride pleases the proud, and so he nodded approvingly and said,—

“You are right; I will assign you apartments of your own. I myself will give you my commands. The pleasant house in the hanging-gardens shall to-day be furnished for you.”

“Thanks, a thousand thanks. Oh, if you knew how happy you make me by this gift. I have heard your brother Bartia often tell of the hanging-gardens; and of all the splendors of your kingdom, none pleased us half so well as the love of that king who raised this fair mountain.”

“To-morrow you shall enter your apartments: tell me now how my messengers have pleased the Egyptians?”

“How can you ask such a question? Who could know this noble old man without loving him, and who could help admiring the manliness of the young heroes, your friends? They all have grown most dear to our house, especially has your handsome brother won all hearts. The Egyptians do not like strangers, but when Bartia appeared, a murmur of admiration passed through the whole gaping crowd.”

The king's brow grew dark at these words, and without making an answer, he spurred his horse till it reared, and galloping at the head of his suite, he soon reached the walls of Babylon.

Though Nitetis, as an Egyptian, was accustomed to the sight of immense buildings, yet she could not help being overpowered by the gigantic proportions of this city. The walls seemed immeasurable; their height was over a hundred feet, and their width so great that two chariots could easily pass abreast. Two hundred and fifty lofty towers crowned and defended this monstrous barricade, and even more of these citadels would have been necessary if Babylon had not been protected on one side by impenetrable marshes. The huge city rose on both sides of the Euphrates; its circuit was more than forty miles: within these walls were buildings that rivalled the Pyramids and the temples of Thebes and Memphis. The gate through which the royal process-

sion entered the city had opened its brazen portals, a hundred feet high; the entrance was defended on each side by a fortified tower, on which was a gigantic winged bull, with the solemn bearded face of a man.

As soon as the king and the golden carriage appeared, the assembled multitude uttered loud cries of joy, and this rose to deafening shouts of delight when they saw the returning Bartia, the people's favorite. The crowd had not seen Cambyses for a long time, for the king, according to the custom of the Medes, was seldom abroad in public; invisible, like the divinity, was he wont to rule, and his appearance was a holiday sight to his subjects. So all Babylon had come together to see the dreaded ruler, and the loved prince; all the windows were filled with eager women, who threw flowers and scattered out perfumes upon the procession. The whole pavement was strewn with myrtle and palm-branches; green trees stood before the doors; carpets and cloths hung from the windows, and wreaths of flowers from house to house. Incense and odor of sandal-wood filled the air, and in dense crowds, on both sides of the streets, stood thousands of gaping Babylonians in white linen tunics and woollen coats and short mantles, of various colors, holding in their hands long staves, tipped with gold and silver pomegranates, birds, and roses.

The streets through which the royal party passed were broad and straight, with tall and stately brick-built houses on each side; high above all towered the temple of Bel, with its monstrous staircase, which wound like a snake in eight wide circles around the building, till it reached the sanctuary on the highest of the several stories.

They now approached the king's palace, whose vast proportions corresponded with the size of the rest of the city; the walls which surrounded it were covered with different colored glazed figures, representing strange hybrid human forms, and those of birds, cattle, and fish, also scenes of hunting, or war, and solemn processions. Towards the north, along the river, rose the hanging-gardens; to the east, on the other side of the Euphrates, was the smaller palace, which was connected

with the other by a strong stone bridge, considered a marvel of architecture at the time.

Passing through the brazen doors of the three walls surrounding the palace, the party halted in the courtyard, the horses of Nitetis stopped, and, assisted from her carriage by the servants, she found herself in her new home, and before long was establishing herself in her temporary apartments in the seraglio.

Cambyses and the others were still standing, surrounded by a hundred glittering nobles, in the palace-yard, which was strewn with bright carpets, when they heard the sound of women's voices; and a lovely young Persian maid, in rich clothing, and with a string of pearls in her thick yellow hair, came hurrying to meet the men, followed by a train of attendants. Cambyses, smiling, tried to stop the way before the headlong girl; but, with a quick movement, she slipped past him, and a moment after hung, half laughing, half weeping, on Bartia's neck, while she heaped him with her impetuous caresses.

Cambyses exclaimed, "Are you not ashamed, Atossa? Remember that since you wear ear-rings you are no longer a child. I have no objection to your rejoicing at your brother's return, but a royal maiden should never forget her modesty. Go to your mother, and tell your guardian, whom I see up there, that on this day of joy I will let you off without punishment. If you force yourself a second time into this place, which is closed to all except those especially summoned, I will bid Bogen shut you up for twelve days. Do you hear that, you mad-cap? Now go tell your mother I will presently visit her with Bartia. Come give me a kiss. You will not? Just wait a minute, little rebel."

At these words the king sprang upon the girl, and snatched her hands with his left one so tightly that she cried aloud, and then bending back her lovely head, he kissed his struggling sister, who ran weeping to the house.

When Atossa had gone, Bartia said, "You seized the poor child too roughly; she cried with pain."

The king frowned darkly, and he forced back the fierce

answer that was on his lips, only saying, as he turned to go toward the house,—

“Come now to our mother; she prayed me to bring you to her as soon as you arrived. The women, as usual, can scarcely wait for you. Nitetis told me that you had bewitched all the Egyptian maidens with your fair hair and rosy cheeks. Pray, while there is time, to Mithra that he will give you eternal youth and keep you from the wrinkles of manhood.”

“Do you mean to imply that I have none of the graces of manhood?”

“I never explain my words. Come.”

“Give me an opportunity of showing that I yield to no one in manliness.”

“The shouts of the Babylonians might have told you that you have found admiration without performing deeds of valor.”

“Cambyses!”

“Come at once. There is a prospect of war with the Massagetæ. You will have an opportunity of showing what you are.”

A few minutes after Bartia lay in the arms of his blind mother, who had waited, with a beating heart, for the boy she pined after, and who was conscious of nothing else, not even her first-born, the mighty king, who looked on with a bitter smile, while she poured out all her love upon his younger brother.

Cambyses felt that the affection which was given to Bartia from all sides he himself could never buy. He did not hate Bartia for it, but it angered him that the boy, who had never distinguished himself by any achievements, should be honored and loved by all Persia as a hero and benefactor. Whatever did not please him he considered of course as wrong; and all wrong he must reprehend. His censure had been feared since his childhood, even by the greatest of the empire. The enthusiastic shouts of the people, the overflowing affection of his mother and sister, but especially the warm praises of Nitetis, kindled in him a jealousy that his proud heart had never known. This humble suppliant for his favor, this princess, like him haughtily proud, this woman who

to please him had given up the hours of her journey to study, this stately maiden, whose half-Greek, half-Egyptian beauty, as a thing most new and strange, won his admiration, had made a very deep impression upon him. Therefore it was that her commendations of his brother infused this poison into his mind.

When he left with Bartia the women's rooms, he took a hasty resolve, and said to him before they parted,—

“You asked for an opportunity to show your manhood. I will not refuse it to you. The Tapuri are in rebellion. I have sent an army to their borders. Betake yourself to Rhagæ, assume the place of commander, and let us see what you are.”

“I thank you, my brother,” said Bartia. “Can I take my friends Darius, Gyges, and Zopyrus with me?”

“I will not refuse you this favor; be obedient and delay not, that you may be with the large expedition that will be sent three months hence to punish the Masagetæ.”

“I go to-morrow.”

“Conduct yourself properly,” added the king.

“Will you grant me a favor when I return, if Auramazda spares my life?”

“I will.”

“Then will I conquer, though it were with a thousand against ten thousand,” answered Bartia, with sparkling eyes, for he thought of Sappho.

“I shall rejoice if you make your fair words deeds. But stop! I have something to say. You are twenty years old, and should marry. Roxana, the daughter of the noble Hydarnes, is of a ripe age; she is beautiful, and is your equal in birth.”

“Oh, my brother, do not speak of marriage! I——”

“You must marry, for I am childless.”

“But you are young, and will not be without offspring, and I do not say I will never marry. Do not be angry with me. Just now I think only of war and not of woman.”

“Then you shall marry Roxana when you come back from the north; but I advise you to take the girl with you to the field. The Persian fights better when he

has to defend, besides his other treasures, a beautiful woman."

"Spare me this, my brother; by the soul of our father, I conjure you, inflict not upon me a person whom I do not know, and do not want to know. Give Roxana to Zopyrus, who is devoted to women, or to Darius or Bessus, who are related to Hydarnes. I cannot love her, and shall only be unhappy."

Cambyses laughed, and said, "Oh, you have learned these notions in Egypt, where men are satisfied with one wife. I have regretted for some time that I sent such a boy into a foreign land, but I am not accustomed to contradiction, and when the war is over will take no excuse. I suspect that you have secret reasons for declining my brotherly proposals; that I should be sorry for on your account."

"Perhaps I may ask you, after the war is over, for that which I wish to refuse now, but never for Roxana. I thank you for your kindness."

"Do not try it too far. How happy you seem! It would not surprise me much if you were in love, and it is on account of your mistress that you have so much contempt for other women."

Bartia blushed to the roots of his hair, and grasping his brother's hand, exclaimed, "Ah, nothing more; take my thanks and my farewell. Let me say good-bye to my mother and Atossa, and take my leave of Nitetis."

Cambyses bit his lips, fixed his penetrating glance upon his brother, and when he saw that he was embarrassed, answered, fiercely,—

"Off to the Tapuri: my wife needs your protection no longer; she has other guardians."

With these words he turned his back upon Bartia, and proceeded to the hall, resplendent with purple and gold, where there awaited him marshals, satraps, justices, treasurers, scribes, counsellors, eunuchs, doorkeepers, chamberlains, masters of ceremonies, valets, butlers, grooms, huntsmen, doctors, ministers of police, eyes and ears of the king as they were called, and messengers, a motley crowd in all. Before him went heralds with

wands, and behind followed a long train of carriers of torches, stools, and litters, carpet-spreaders and scribes, who recorded every command, every hint of their master's, every reward or punishment, and consigned the execution to the proper officers.

In a small apartment opening into the larger room, but shut off from it by a purple curtain, the king was accustomed to dine; here, concealed from the rest, he could watch every movement of his company. To be one of that company was considered the greatest of honors, and even to have meals sent to one from the table, a high mark of favor.

After the king had taken his place, the guests also seated themselves, and then began a gluttonous carouse: whole animals did not more than suffice; and when this part of the meal was over, several courses of the rarest sweetmeats were served up, which afterwards, under the name of "Persian dessert," became famous in Greece.

After the board had been cleared and the glasses filled, the king came out and took his seat at the head of the table, while the cup-bearers brought him wine which they just tasted as a precaution against poisoning. Cambyzes was unusually silent. The suspicion that Bartia loved his wife was alive in his soul. Why had the youth, contrary to all custom, contrary to his duty, refused to marry a high-born and beautiful maiden? why had he asked to see Nitetis before his departure for the field? why had he blushed when he made the request? why had the Egyptian woman, without being interrogated, given him such exalted praise? "It is well that he is going away, he shall not rob me of her love. Were he not my brother, I would send him whither there is no return."

After midnight he broke up the feast. Boges, the chief of the eunuchs, appeared to conduct him to the seraglio, where he was always accustomed to go at this time, if not too drunk.

"Phædime awaits you with impatience."

"She can continue to wait," answered the king. "Have you seen to the refitting of the mansion on the hanging-garden?"

"It will be ready to-morrow."

"Which rooms have been allotted to the Egyptian princess?"

"Those of Amytis, the second wife of your father."

"It is well. Nitetis is to be treated with the greatest respect. You are to give her no commands, except those with which I entrust you." Boges bowed. "See that no one speaks to her, not even Cræsus, until my—until I give other directions."

"Cræsus was with her this evening."

"What had he to say to her?"

"I do not know, for I do not understand any Greek; but I heard the name of Bartia several times, and the princess appeared to have heard bad news; she seemed very sad when I went to her after Cræsus had gone."

"Angramainius blast your tongue!" muttered the king, as he turned his back upon the eunuch, and, following his valets and torch-bearers, entered his apartments.

About noon on the next day, Bartia rode out with his friends and a large troop of retainers, on his way to the country of the Tapuri. Cræsus accompanied them to the gates of Babylon. As he was taking farewell of the prince, the latter whispered,—

"If any messenger from Egypt has letters for me in his bags, send them to me."

"Will you be able to read the Greek handwriting?"

"Gyges and love will help me."

"Nitetis, whom I have told of your departure, bade me greet you, and say that you must not forget Egypt."

"I am not likely to do that,—farewell."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FIRST SUSPICIONS.

CAMBYSES passed a sleepless night; jealousy, so new to him, increased his passion for the Egyptian princess whom he could not yet call his wife, for the Persian law prescribed that before the king could take into his house a new spouse, she must be first instructed in the Iranian customs and the religion of Zoroaster, and therefore Nitetis must pass a whole year before she could be married. But what was the law to Cambyses? He considered the incarnation of it to be his own person, and thought four months ample for this purpose.

All his other wives were to-day hateful in his sight, filling him even with loathing. From his earliest youth his house had been peopled for him: fair maids from every part of Asia, black-eyed Armenians, pale virgins from the Caucasus, tender girls from the banks of the Ganges, wanton, luxurious Babylonian women, golden-haired Persians, and the soft, yielding daughters of the Median plain, were his; even several of the children of the noblest Achæmenides were offered to him in marriage. Phædime, the daughter of the high-born Otanes, the niece of his mother, Cassandane, had been hitherto his favorite, or rather his only wife, the sole one whom he regarded as other than a purchased slave; but even she seemed in his satiety and disgust common and contemptible when he thought of Nitetis. The Egyptian appeared to him to be made of nobler stuff than them all: these were flattering, servile wenches; Nitetis was a queen: these lay in the dust at his feet; she, when he looked upon her, seemed as proud and stately as himself; she should have not Phædime's place only, but should be to him as Cassandane was to Cyrus. She alone could assist him with advice and counsel, while the others lived for clothes and finery, petty tricks, and childish folly. She

must love him, for he was her protector, her king, her father, her brother in this strange land. "She must!" he said to himself, and his wish was to the tyrant the same as its accomplishment. "Let Bartia look to himself!" he muttered; "he will learn what it is to cross my purpose."

Nitetic, too, had a restless night; in the rooms near hers the women sang and shouted uproariously till midnight; she could often hear the noisy voice of Boges, as he laughed and joked with those under his charge: when at last there was quiet through the palace, she fell to thinking of her distant home and her poor Tachot. Then she slept, exhausted by the fatigue of her journey, and dreamt of her husband: she thought she saw him riding on his black stallion,—the unruly animal shied at Bartia, who was lying in the way, and threw the king into the Nile, which suddenly began to flow with blood-red waves; in her agony she shrieked for help and her cry resounded from the Pyramids, growing louder and more terrible, till she waked at the fearful echo. But what was that, that mournful sound which she heard in her dream, and which now struck upon her waking ear? She hurriedly opened the shutters of her window and looked out into the open air. A large and beautiful garden, with its ponds and long avenues of trees, lay below; except that strange noise, no sound was heard, and even this died away in the morning breeze; and in a little while she heard in the distance the stir and bustle of the great city, now aroused to its work and business,—a sound like the distant roar of the ocean.

While she was standing there she saw two persons come out of the house, and she recognized Boges, who was talking with a handsome, carelessly-dressed Persian woman; as they approached, Nitetic hid herself behind the half-opened shutters and listened, for she thought she heard her own name.

"The Egyptian is still sleeping," said the eunuch; "she must be wearied by her journey, for her windows are closed."

"Tell me at once," said the Persian, "do you really think that I have anything to fear from this stranger?"

"Certainly, my poppet."

"But what makes you suppose so?"

"The fact that this new woman has to obey only the king's commands, and not mine."

"Is that all?"

"No, my treasure; I know the king, and can read his face as a Magus the holy writings."

"Then we must destroy her."

"That is easier said than done, my dove."

"Let me go, you impudent fellow."

"Oh, come, come, there is nobody to see us; and remember you can't do without me."

"As far as I am concerned—but tell me at once what is to be done?"

"Thank you, my sweet love, Phædime. Well, first, we must keep perfectly quiet and watch for our opportunity; when that hypocritical old sneak, Cræsus, is once out of the way, we can set our trap."

The speakers had now moved so far off that Nitetis could hear no more. Mute with indignation, she closed the shutters, and, summoning her servants, bade them dress her; she now knew her enemies; she saw that a hundred dangers were awaiting her, but for all she felt proud and stately, for she was Cambyses' true wife. Never had she been so conscious of her own worth as in the presence of these wretched creatures.

"What was that fearful sound that I heard early this morning?" she asked of the woman who was arranging her hair.

"Oh, you mean the gong?"

"Yes, about two hours ago I was aroused by its strange clang."

"Oh, yes, that was the gong which every morning wakes the sons of the nobles who are brought up in the king's palace; you will soon get used to its sound. We never hear it, any longer; on the contrary, on festivals, when it is silent, the unaccustomed quiet arouses us at once. In the hanging-gardens, every morning, whether it is cold or warm, you may see the boys taken to their bath; these poor little rogues are removed from their mothers when they are six years old, to be educated

with the rest of their fellows, under the eye of the king."

"That they may early learn the wantonness and luxury of the court?"

"Oh, no, the unhappy boys have a very hard time of it; they have to sleep on the hard ground, to rise every day at sunrise, to eat bread, water, and a little meat; they do not even know what wine or vegetables are; sometimes they have to fast whole days for no reason at all; they say it is to harden them. When we are at Pasargadæ or Ecbatana, you may be sure that they will be taken to the bath when it is bitterly cold,—and, when we are here, or at Susa, no matter how hot it is, they must make long marches in the sun. You should see the feats these boys can do, especially when the king is looking at them. Cambyses will certainly let you, if you ask him."

"Yes, of course; but do you know that in Egypt the girls, as well as the boys, are trained in gymnastics? It is in that way, by running and by playing at graces, that my limbs have become so flexible."

"How curious! Why, *we* grow up just as we like, and learn nothing except to weave and spin a little. Is it true that most Egyptian women can read and write?"

"Certainly."

"By Mithra, you must be clever people! Except the Magi and scribes, nobody here learns these difficult sciences. The young nobles are only taught to speak the truth, to be brave and obedient, to honor the gods, to hunt, to ride, to plant trees, together with a knowledge of simples. Any one who wants to be able to write must go to the Magi when he is grown up, like the noble Darius. To the women, it is even forbidden to attempt these studies. I have finished with you now; this string of pearls which the king has sent you this morning makes an excellent contrast with your black hair; but any one can see that you are not accustomed to these white silk pantaloons, and your shoes with the high heels. When you have walked a few times in them you will do as well as, if not better than, any of the Persians."

Just then came a knock at the door, and Boges entered

to conduct Nitetis to Cassandane who was awaiting her. The eunuch assumed the position of the humblest slave and overwhelmed her with a flood of flowery compliments, in which he compared her to the sun, the starry heaven, a pure fountain of happiness, a rose-garden, and so on.

Nitetis, not deigning him a word, went with beating heart to the chamber of the queen-mother. In the dimly-lighted room she found Cassandane dressed in a blue robe embroidered in silver; over her white hair was a long veil of the lightest Egyptian lace, whose ends passed around her neck and were fastened under her chin. The face of the blind old woman, set thus in a frame of delicate tissue, was refined and regular, full of intelligence and kindness. The blind eyes of the queen were closed, but one expected to see, when they were open, two mild, friendly stars shine out. Her height and bearing showed a stately figure. Her whole appearance was worthy of the widow of the great and good Cyrus. On a little stool at her feet sat her youngest-born child, Atossa, drawing long threads from her golden spindle. Opposite to them stood Cambyses, and half hidden in the dim light of the apartment the Egyptian oculist, Nebenchari.

When Nitetis had crossed the threshold, the king met her and led her to his mother. The daughter of Amasis sank upon her knees before the venerable old woman, and kissed her hand with genuine heartiness.

"Welcome," said the queen, laying her hand upon the maiden's head. "I have heard much good of you, and hope I have gained a dear daughter."

Nitetis kissed the delicate hand of the queen, and answered gently, "I thank you for these words; let me call you mother,—you, the wife of the great Cyrus,—for now you are my only one."

Cassandane felt the hot tears trickle on her hands, and touching with her lips the forehead of the weeping girl, she answered,—

"I know just what it is you feel, and there is always a place in my heart for you. As I can, in all sincerity, call you daughter, so do you call me mother. In a few months you will be the wife of my son, and after that the

gods, perhaps, may bestow upon you a gift which will make you yourself a mother."

"May Auramazda bless us in that!" said Cambyses. "I am glad, my mother, that my spouse is well-pleasing to you; and that she will like us, I am sure, when once she learns our Persian ways. If she studies attentively, we can be married in four months."

"But the laws?" answered his mother.

"I say in four months, let who dare contradict me! Take good care of the queen's eyes, Nebenchari; and, if my wife allows you, as you are her countryman, you may pay her a visit to-morrow. Farewell! Bartia greets you; he is on his way to the Tapuri."

Atossa's eyes filled with tears at this, and Cassandane said, "You might have let us have the boy for a few months at least. Your general, Megabyzus, could easily manage such a petty nation without any assistance."

"No doubt he could; but Bartia longed for an opportunity to prove himself in manly deeds, and so I send him to the field."

"Could he not have waited till the campaign against the Massagetæ, in which far greater glory is to be won?" asked Cassandane.

"And if a Tapurian arrow should strike him, then you will have prevented him from fulfilling the most sacred duty of a man, the avenging of our father's murder," said Atossa.

"Be silent!" exclaimed Cambyses, "that I may not have to teach you what befits women and children. That child of fortune, Bartia, will escape untouched, and, let us hope, will deserve the love that you are over-lavish of at present."

"How can you say so? Is not every manly virtue to be found in him? Is it his fault that he has not had the same opportunities as you for distinguishing himself in battle?" demanded the queen. "You are the king whose command I honor, but my son, also, whom I may blame because he has robbed, for what reason I know not, his blind mother of the joy of her old age. Bartia could easily have remained with us till the war against the

Massagetæ, though it has pleased you to order it otherwise."

"And what I ordain is good," interrupted Cambyses, pale with rage. "I will hear no more of this."

With these words he left the room angrily, and, followed by the suite that always surrounded him, betook himself to the great hall.

An hour had passed since the departure of Cambyses, and still Nitetis sat with Atossa at the feet of the blind queen. The two Persian women listened eagerly to the stories of their new friend, and were never tired of asking about all the marvels of Egypt.

"Oh, how I should like to go there!" exclaimed Atossa, "and see all that you have been telling me of. But what I think best of all is your way of dining, when all men and women can talk together as they please. Now, we only feast with the men on New Year's Day and the king's birthday; and even then we cannot talk to them, and it is a breach of propriety if we but raise our eyes. By Mithra, my mother, am I not a child of Cyrus, and the equal of any man? Do I not speak the truth; can I not command and obey; do I not long for glory; could I not ride, shoot, swim, and fight, were I only taught?"

"Remember what is fitting," said Cassandane. "A woman should submit herself humbly to her fate, and not strive after men's deeds."

"But there are women who do just as men do. At Thermodon, in Themiscyra, and on the river Iris, in Comana, there dwell those Amazons who have carried on wars, and even now bear men's weapons."

"Who did you learn that from?"

"Why, from my guardian, old Stephanion of Sinope, whom my father brought as a prisoner to Pasargadæ."

"But I can teach you better," said Nitetis. "At Themiscyra there are a number of women who, though equipped like soldiers, are really nothing but priestesses; they are accustomed to dress like the warlike goddess whom they serve. Cræsus says there has never been an Amazonian army. The Greeks, after they had seen these women, made up the whole story."

“But what wicked liars they are, then!” exclaimed the disappointed child.

“Certainly,” said Nitetis, “truth is not so sacred to the Greeks as it is in your eyes; inventing such stories, and singing them in beautiful verses to their astonished hearers, they call ‘writing poems’—not ‘lying.’”

“Just as it is with us; the singers who praise the glory of my husband, change and exaggerate the history of Cyrus so that I hardly know it; yet nobody thinks of calling them liars. But tell me, my daughter, is it true that these Hellenes are more beautiful than all other men, and understand the arts better even than the Egyptians themselves?”

“Of that I cannot judge,—our master-pieces are so different from theirs. When I go into one of our vast temples to pray, I feel as if I must throw myself in the dust, in the presence of the great god, and beseech him not to crush a poor worm like me; but in Hera’s shrine, at Samos, I lifted up my hands, and joyfully praised the gods that they had made the earth so beautiful. In Egypt, I believed, as I was taught, ‘Life is a sleep, and at the hour of death thou wilt awake to thy true life in the kingdom of Osiris.’ In Greece, I thought, ‘For life and its pleasures I was born into this fair and beautiful world, which embraces me with its marvellous beauty.’”

At this moment Nebenchari came forward to attend to the eyes of the queen; and, when he had finished, Cræsus entered the room, and, talking first of other things, led the conversation to the necessity of the change that Nitetis must make in her religion. He spoke long and eloquently about it, telling her that the different gods worshipped throughout the world were really the same, and she would not be an apostate if she adopted the faith of the Persians. Thanks to the previous teaching of Pythagoras, he found his task much easier than he had expected; and the mind of Nitetis seemed finally to be entirely at rest on this subject.

“You are an apt scholar,” said Cræsus, at length, laying his hand on her head. “As a reward, every morning and every afternoon till sunset you may visit Cassandane, or receive Atossa at the hanging-gardens; and I have

also brought you from Sais sets of balls and graces for you to amuse yourself with, after the Egyptian manner."

"Balls?" asked Atossa, astonished. "What should we do with the great heavy wooden things?"

"Do not be apprehensive; the balls I mean are very light, for they are made of fish-skin or leather, and filled with air, and are not like those of the Persian boys. Are you satisfied with me, Nitetis?"

"How can I thank you enough, my father?"

"Listen now, while I teach you the arrangement of your day. In the mornings you will visit Cassandane, talk to Atossa, and hearken to your mother's counsels." The queen nodded approvingly. "At noon I will come to instruct you, and talk with you about Egypt and those you have left behind there,—if you have no objection, it will be in Persian." Nitetis smiled. "Every other day Oropastes will wait upon you to initiate you into the religion of your new country."

"I will take every pains to understand him."

"In the afternoon you and Atossa can be together as long as you like. Are you content with this plan?"

"Yes, oh yes, most certainly," she answered, kissing the old man's hand.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE KING'S BIRTHDAY.

ON the following day Nitetis took possession of the country-house on the hanging-gardens, and lived there in entire simplicity; but contented and busy under the direction of Cræsus. Every day she was carried in a closed litter to see Cassandane and Atossa. The blind queen was soon to her a loving and beloved mother; the vivacious and unruly daughter of Cyrus almost replaced her sister, left behind on the distant Nile. Nitetis could have no better companion than this light-hearted child, whose fun and merriment made her forget her regrets and home-

sickness. And her own gravity checked and controlled the wild little Persian.

Crœsus and Cassandane were alike satisfied with their new daughter and scholar. Oropastes the Magus commended to Cambyses the capability and industry of his pupil, who also learnt Persian unusually quickly and well. The king would always go to his mother's when he supposed Nitetis was there; and he gave her every day beautiful presents. The greatest favor he showed her, was by never visiting her house—thus indicating that he intended to make her his real wife; a grace that many a prince's daughter in his harem could not boast.

The gentle, earnest girl had wrought a strange charm upon the self-willed, despotic man. Her mere presence appeared to be enough to soften him; for hours he would be a looker-on at the game of graces, and would never take his eyes from the graceful movements of the beautiful Egyptian; once when a ball fell into the water, he jumped in after it, dressed as he was, and rescued it. Nitetis screamed when she saw the king perform this knightly deed; but Cambyses, handing her the dripping plaything, said, "Take better care, or I shall have to frighten you a second time;" and taking from his neck a golden chain studded with precious stones, he gave it to the blushing girl, who thanked him with a look that told how much her heart went out to her future husband.

Crœsus, Cassandane, and Atossa very soon noticed that Nitetis loved the king; out of her fear for the proud, overbearing man, an intense passion had grown up within her. She thought that robbed of his presence she should die; his very being seemed as glorious and mighty as a divinity itself; and the wish to possess him utterly presumptuous, but its fulfilment dearer to her than even the return to her own home, and the union with those whom alone she had hitherto loved. She was hardly conscious of all this, and endeavored to think it merely fear; and that she trembled at his coming from dread and not from longing. Crœsus read her heart easily, and made her blush painfully by singing to her in his old cracked voice a new song of Anacreon's that Ibycus had taught him at Sais.

" We read the flying courser's name
 Upon his side in marks of flame,
 And by their turban'd brows alone
 The warriors of the East are known;
 But in the lover's glowing eyes
 The inlet to his bosom lies;
 Through them we see the small faint mark
 Where Love has dropp'd his burning spark."*

And so in play and work, in seriousness and sport, in love given and love returned, the months, weeks, and days of Nitetis went happily by. The command of Cambyses, "You must learn to like it here," had been accomplished; and when Mesopotamian spring, January, February, and March, which follows in those regions the rainy December, was over and gone, when, during the vernal equinox, the great holiday of the Asiatics, the new year's festival had been celebrated, when the May sun had begun to burn with a warm glow, then Nitetis first felt at home in Babylon; and all the Persians knew that she was taking Phædime's place, and would be the favorite wife of their sovereign. The importance of Boges diminished daily; for it was known that Cambyses never entered the harem now; and all the influence the eunuch had ever had was through the women whom he compelled to cajole the king into granting whatever he wanted for himself or others.

All the while he, and the fallen favorite Phædime, plotted how they might ruin the Egyptian princess; but their cleverest tricks and plans were rendered utterly futile by the king's love and the blameless conduct of his betrothed. Phædime, impatient, humiliated, thirsting for revenge, urged the prudent Boges to decisive action; but he still counselled patient waiting.

At last he came to her full of joy, exclaiming, "When Bartia comes back, my poppet, then is our time. I have arranged a plan that will break the Egyptian's neck as sure as my name is Boges."

At these words the leering eunuch rubbed his smooth, fat hands, and looked as satisfied as though he had done some pious deed. More than this he would not tell

* Moore's Anacreon.

Phædime concerning "his little plan," as he called it, and only answered to her pressing questions, "I would rather put my head in the jaws of a lion than my secret in the ear of a woman. Do therefore what I tell you, and wait patiently for what the future may bring forth."

Nebenchari the oculist attended Cassandane every day, but would have nothing further to do with the other Persians, with whom his silence and moroseness had grown into a proverb. During the day he sat turning over the leaves of a large papyrus roll, that he called the Holy Ambres and the book of Alothes. At night, by the king's permission and that of the Satrap of Babylon, he would often ascend Tritantachmes, one of the high mural towers, to study the stars. The Chaldean priests, the primitive astronomers, had invited him to make his observations from the summit of the great temple, but he refused their offer, and persistently maintained his gloomy reserve. When Oropastes the Magus showed him the celebrated Babylonian sun-dial, which Anaximander of Miletus had also introduced into Greece, he laughed, and turning his back on the high-priest, answered, "We knew all about that before you had ever heard of the hours and minutes."

Nitētis tried to make friends with him, but he took no notice of her, and seemed even to avoid her. When she one day asked him, "Do you find anything evil in me, Nebenchari? or have I offended you?" he retorted, "You are an alien to me, for I count none among my friends who can so easily and faithlessly forget their own blood, their gods, and their native country."

Boges soon noticed that the oculist was angry with his master's intended wife, and he endeavored to make him his ally; but Nebenchari repelled his flatteries, and refused his presents with dignified scorn.

Whenever an Angarus rode into the court with a message for the king, the eunuch would hasten to ask him whence he came, and whether he had anything new from the army sent against the Tapuri. At last the wished-for messenger arrived, bearing the tidings that the rebellion was crushed, and that Bartia would soon be home.

Three weeks passed: post after post announced the

approach of the conquering prince. The streets were again glorious in festal array, as he passed through on his way to the palace, where his mother was waiting for him in joyful impatience. Even Cambyses received his brother with sincere heartiness, and led him, purposely, to Cassandane when he knew Nitetis was with her. His heart was full of the certainty that the Egyptian loved him. He wished to show Bartia his confidence in him, and did not hesitate to call his former jealousy a mere delusion. His love made him gentle and kind, and his hands seemed never weary of bestowing bounty and of doing good. His angry temper slumbered; and where once the heads of his victims were placed as a horrible warning, could be seen now only the hungry crows of Babylon cawing for their food. With the fall of the flattering eunuchs, a class who had been first introduced into the palace of Cyrus at the time of the amalgamation of Media, Lydia, and Babylonia, rose the importance of the noble Persian line of the Achæmenides; and Cambyses, for the good of his country, listened more to the advice of his kinsmen than to the counsels of the keepers of the seraglio.

The venerable Hystaspes, father of Darius, and cousin of the king, who was viceroy of Persia proper, and who was accustomed to reside at Pasargadæ; Pharnaspes, maternal grandfather of the king; Otanes, his uncle and father-in-law; Intaphernes, Aspathines, Gobryas, Hydarnes, the general Megabyzus, the father of Zopyrus; the ambassador Prexaspes; Cræsus, and the heroic Araspes,—in fine, all the distinguished heads of the nobility of Persia were now assembled at court. Besides these, all the peers of the kingdom, the satraps or viceroys of every province, and the chief priests of all the cities were also in Babylon for the purpose of celebrating the king's birthday. Dignitaries and deputies from all the provinces poured into the capital to bring presents and congratulations to the sovereign, and to take part in the great sacrifices, at which thousands of horses, deer, cattle, and asses were to be slain in honor of the gods. To-day a largesse was given to all the people, and every one could make a petition to the king, which was seldom

refused; in all the cities public dinners were given at the royal expense.

Cambyses had ordered that eight days after his birthday his marriage with Nitetis should take place, and that all the great persons of his kingdom should be invited. The streets swarmed with strangers: the vast palaces on both sides of the Euphrates were filled to overflowing. This enthusiasm of his people; this throng of men which, in the deputies, represented his entire empire, contributed not a little to the king's good humor. His pride was satisfied; and the only empty place in his heart, the craving he felt for love, was now filled by Nitetis. He thought himself, for the first time in his life, really happy; and he distributed his presents not as if he were merely going through a duty, but as if it were a great pleasure to him to give happiness. Megabyzus, the general, could not praise the deeds of Bartia and his friends enough; and Cambyses embraced the young heroes, bestowed upon them golden chains and horses, called them "brothers," and even reminded Bartia of the favor that he had promised to grant if he returned victorious from the war. When the young man cast down his eyes, and seemed unable to tell his wishes, the king laughed and said,—

"You see, good friends, how our young hero blushes like a girl, and as he looks as if he were going to ask for something very portentous, let him wait till my birthday; and at the carouse, when wine has given him courage, he can whisper what he is now afraid to suggest. Let your demand be as great as possible. I am happy myself, and want to see all my friends so."

Bartia thanked him, and went to his mother's apartment to tell her the desire of his heart. He anticipated great resistance; but Cræsus had well prepared his way by so highly praising the virtues and grace, the gifts and accomplishments of Sappho, that Atossa and Nitetis declared that Rhodope must have given the old king a love-potion. So that after a little resistance, Cassandane yielded to the importunities of her son.

"A Greek the proper spouse of a Persian prince?" she objected. "That has never been. What will Cambyses say? How will you obtain his consent?"

"Have no fear on that score, mother," answered Bartia. "I am as sure of his consent as I am that Sappho will be an honor to our house."

"Cræsus has told me much good about her; and I am glad that you have made up your mind to marry, though I cannot think such an alliance suitable to a son of Cyrus, and I fear that the Achæmenides will be slow to recognize the child of this Greek as their king, were it to happen that Cambyses continues to be childless."

"I fear nothing, for my hopes are not set upon the throne. Besides, there has been many a Persian king who was the son of a much more humble woman than my Sappho. I am sure my kinsmen will not complain when I show them the jewel I have found on the Nile."

"May Sappho be like our Nitetis, whom I love as my own daughter; I bless the day that brought her to this country. With her kind and loving looks she has melted your brother's stern heart; her gentleness and goodness make bright my darkness and old age, and her grave dignity has changed Atossa from an unruly child into a serious woman. Call them now,—they are playing in the garden,—that we may tell them of the new friend you hope to bring them."

"Pardon me, my mother," said Bartia; "I think we had better say nothing about this till we get my brother's consent; if for nothing else, that we may spare them any disappointment."

Early in the morning of the royal birthday the Persians brought their sacrifices to the bank of the Euphrates. On an artificial hill stood an immense silver altar, from which a mighty fire sent up its flames and odorous smoke to heaven. Magi, clothed in white, fed it with fancifully-cut pieces of sandal-wood, and stirred it with bundles of twigs. The chief priest wore a fillet, the "paiti-dhana," whose ends covered his mouth, so that his breath might not defile the pure fire. On a meadow near the river the sacrificial animals had been slaughtered, and the flesh cut into small pieces, covered with salt, and then spread out on grass, clover, myrtle flowers, and laurel leaves, that nothing dead or bloody might touch

the patient, holy earth, the beautiful daughter of Auramazda.

Now Oropastes the "Destur," or priest, highest in rank, went to the fire and threw fresh butter into it. The flames then rose higher, and all the Persians fell upon their knees and hid their faces, for they believed that the fire was rising to meet its father, the great god. Then the Magus took a mortar and filled it with the leaves and stalks of the sacred haoma plant, ground them up, and then poured the pinkish juice—the food of the gods—into the flames. Finally, while the other priests kept the fire constantly sending up a fresh blaze by pouring butter upon it, he raised his hands to heaven, and sang a prayer from the holy writings. In it he called down the blessing of the gods upon all things pure and good, especially upon the king and the whole kingdom. The good spirits of the light, of life, of truth, of noble deeds, of the bounteous earth, of the refreshing water, of shining metal, of the meadows, of the trees, and of all the pure creatures were praised; the evil spirits of darkness, of lying which deceives men, of sickness, of death, of sin, of barrenness, of benumbing cold, of desolating drought, of nasty filth and vermin, together with their father Angramainius, were cursed; and finally all present joined in the festal antiphon—"Purity and majesty await the pure and just." Then the king's prayer concluded the sacrifice.

Cambyzes immediately after entered his golden carriage, which was ornamented with carnelion, topazes, and amber, and drawn by four snow-white Nysean horses, and which took him to the hall of reception where he was to give audience to the nobility and deputies. As soon as the king and his suite had departed, the priests chose out for themselves the best portions of the sacrificial meat, and gave the rest to the eager assembly to take with them to their homes. The Persian gods disdained the sacrifice as food: they demanded only the souls of the slaughtered beasts; and many a poor man, even among the priests, sustained his life by the meat of the prodigal sacrifice. As the Magus prayed, so must every Persian pray. His religion forbade his demanding anything from heaven for himself alone. Rather must every pious man pray for all

the Persians, and especially for the good of the king, and as he himself was a part of the whole, he would be made happy if the gods gave blessings to the kingdom. It was their lofty sacrifice of one's self for the common good, that had made the Persians what they were. And the reason they prayed especially for the king was, that they regarded him as the incarnation and embodiment of the empire. The Egyptian priests represented the Pharaohs as actual divinities. The Persians called their princes only the *sons* of the gods; and the latter ruled with a far wider sway, because they had had the sagacity to keep themselves free of the tutelage of the priests, which, if it did not govern the Pharaohs, at least influenced them much in every way. As to the intolerance of the Egyptians, which strove to bar out all strange gods from the Nile, they knew not, in Asia, what it was. The Babylonians, after they were conquered by Cyrus and incorporated into the great Asiatic kingdom, were allowed to pray to their old gods just as before. The Jews, Ionians, the people of Asia Minor,—in fine, all the nations subject to Cambyses, remained undisturbed in the possession of their own religions and manners. Therefore at Babylon, on the royal birthday, there burnt, near the altars of the Magi, many other sacrificial flames, which the ambassadors had kindled for the gods whom they worshipped at their own home.

When the king had reached the palace, the train of envoys formed themselves into a long procession, which marched through the streets of Babylon on its way to the king's house. As they passed one could hear the blare of the Median trumpets, the soft notes of the Phrygian flutes, the cymbals and harps of Jews, the tambourines of the Ionians, the kettle-drums and gongs of the Syrians, the conches and drums of the Aryans from the mouth of the Indus, and the loud clang of the Bactrian war-horns. None of the festal envoys came with empty hands: these brought a train of noble horses; those, gigantic elephants and farcical apes; a third set, rhinoceroses and buffaloes, covered with caparisons and tassels; a fourth, double-humped Bactrian camels, with gold circles around their shaggy necks; others brought wagons full of various

kinds of wood, with ivory, costly tissues, silver and gold vessels, baskets full of gold dust and ingots, rare plants for the garden, and strange animals for the hunting park of the king,—among which antelopes, zebras, various sorts of apes and birds were the most conspicuous: the latter, chained to a tree and shaking their wings, were a rare sight. These gifts were the tribute of the conquered countries. After they were shown to the king, they were examined by the treasurers and scribes, and if they were too trifling they were sent back. In this case the miserly givers had to make double compensation.

The procession arrived at the palace without having to make a halt, for the whip-bearers and soldiers, who stood on each side, made a barrier against the pressing crowd, and so kept the way clear.

As splendid as the procession, was the throne-room of the palace. At one end of it, raised six steps, each guarded by two golden dogs, was the king's chair, over which hung a purple canopy, supported by four gold pillars, studded with precious stones, and whose top bore two winged disks, the "feruers" of the king. Behind it were grouped the attendants of the monarch, engaged in a duty high in honor at the court, that of brushing the flies from his head. On each side were the guests, relatives, and friends of the king, the dignitaries of the empire, and the most distinguished of the priests and eunuchs. The walls and the roof of the whole apartment were covered with glittering gold, and on the floor were strewn purple carpets. Three winged bulls, with men's heads, lay as guards before the silver doors of the hall, and in the courtyard were stationed the body-guards, whose lances were ornamented with gold and silver apples. They wore golden coats of mail under their purple tunics, and swords, sparkling with diamonds, in golden scabbards. Among them, distinguished for stately form and proud bearing, were the company of "The Immortals."

Ushers and masters of ceremonies, having short ivory wands in their hands, conducted the envoys into the hall and to the throne, who, when they reached its steps, prostrated themselves, as though to kiss the earth, and hid their hands in their sleeves. Before they answered

any of the questions of the king, a cloth was fastened around the lower part of their faces, lest their breath should defile his pure and sacred person.

Cambyses spoke to the envoys, now in a friendly, now in a stern tone, as he was satisfied or not with the tribute and the obedience of each province. When, almost the last of all, the Jewish embassy approached the throne, he called to the Hebrews—two grave men with sharply-cut features and long beards—in a friendly tone, "Stay!" One of them was dressed in the manner of the richest and most distinguished Babylonians. The second wore a purple robe, woven in a single piece, ornamented with little bells and tassels, and fastened by a girde of red, blue, and white, and a blue garment upon his shoulders. From his neck hung a little bag with the holy Urim and Thummim, on which were written, in gold and diamonds, the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. A white mitre or fillet, whose ends fell down on his shoulders, covered the earnest brow of the high-priest.

"I rejoice to see you again, Beltsazar," said the king to the first of the pair. "Since my father's death you never show yourself within our gates."

Beltsazar, bowing low, answered, "My lord's grace makes happy his servant! Thou lettest the sun of thy favor shine upon thy servant, unworthy as he is. Grant, therefore, to my poor nation, whom thy great father allowed to depart to their home, one prayer. This old man at my side, Joshua, the high-priest of our God, has not feared to take the long journey to Babylon that he might lay his petition before thee. Let his speech be pleasant in thine ears, and let his words find a fruitful place in thy heart."

"I think I can divine your wish," said the king. "I am right when I conjecture that it concerns the building of the temple in your country?"

"From my lord there is nothing hidden," the priest replied. "Thy servants at Jerusalem long to see the face of their master, and beseech thee, through me, that thou wouldst vouchsafe to visit the land of their fathers, and that thou wouldst let them continue the building of the

temple which thy royal father—God's grace be with him!—first permitted."

The king smiled as he answered, "You know how to plead your petition with all the cunning of your race, and how to choose the right word and the right time. On my birthday I cannot refuse to a faithful people the boon they ask. So I promise you to visit, as soon as possible, the good city of Jerusalem, and the land of your fathers."

"Thou wilt thus bless thy servants. Our vines and our olive-trees will bear fairer fruit at thy approach; our gates will open wide to receive thee, and Israel will come to meet its master with songs and melody, twice happy that, as the new founder of the temple, they may——"

"Stay! stay! good priest! Your first prayer shall be fulfilled, as I said, for I have long wished to see your rich Tyre, and golden Sidon, and that Jerusalem of yours with its strange superstition; but if I allow the building of your temple, what will be left for me to concede next year?"

"Thy servants will not again importune their lord, if thou wilt allow them to build a house for the God of their fathers."

"Strange men these of Palestine," said Cambyses. "I hear that you believe in one God, of whom no graven image is permitted, and who is spirit only. Do you think that this omnipresent being longs for a house? Surely your great spiritual divinity must be weak and pitiable if he needs a roof against the wind and rain, and a shelter against the heat. If your God is everywhere, why not fall down and pray to him, as we do, in any place, for in all places you can certainly be heard?"

"The God of Israel does hear his people in all places," answered the high-priest. "He heard us when we were in the bondage of Egypt, and were perishing far from our own land; he heard us when we wept by the waters of Babylon. He chose thy father to be the instrument of our deliverance; and he will hear my prayer to-day, and incline thy heart to grant thy servant's petition. O mighty king, grant to thy servants to build a place of sacrifice for the twelve scattered tribes of their nation; an altar, at whose steps they may pray together, and a

house where they can keep holy-day. For this grace will the blessing of the Lord be upon thee, and his curse upon thine enemies forever."

"Grant the building of the temple to my brethren!" pleaded Beltsazar, the richest and most respected of the Jews remaining in Babylon, whom Cyrus had treated with the greatest respect, and with whom he sometimes consulted.

"Will you remain at peace, if I grant your request? My father permitted you to begin this work, and gave you the means of completing it. Happy and united you left Babylon for your own country, but with the building of the temple hatred and discord came among you. Countless letters from the most respected of the Syrians importuned Cyrus to forbid the continuance of the work; and only a little while ago your fellow-countrymen, the Samaritans, implored me to do the same thing. Pray, then, to your God how and where you will, but I cannot, for your sake, sanction that which I know will cause strife and dissension among you."

"Wilt thou take back to-day a grace thy father granted by a royal decree?" asked Beltsazar.

"A decree?"

"It must be still preserved in the archives of thy kingdom."

"When you find it and lay it before me I will not only permit this building to go on, but I will help you in it. The will of my father is as holy to me as the commands of the gods."

"Wilt thou allow me to have the archives of Ecbatana, where this writing must be, searched by the scribes?"

"I allow it, but I fear me you will find nothing. Tell your countrymen, holy priest, that I am satisfied with the equipment of the soldiers whom they sent to Persia for the expedition against the Massagetæ. My general, Megabyzus, praises their carriage and appearance. May they approve themselves, as in my father's wars. And you, Beltsazar, I invite to my wedding with the Egyptian princess, and I commission you to tell your countrymen Meshach and Abed Nego, the first men in Babylon, after you, that I expect them this evening at my table."

"The God of Israel send thee blessing and happiness!" answered Beltsazar, bowing low.

"I say amen to that," replied the king. "I hold your unseen God, who has done such great wonders, for no powerless divinity. One thing more: several Jews have lately mocked the gods of the Babylonians, and have been punished for it; warn your people, they will make themselves hated by this persistent bigotry, and the pride with which they insist upon theirs being the only true God. Take pattern by us, who, content with what we have, are willing to let others alone. Do not assume to be better than other men. I like you well: such pride as yours pleases my fancy; but take care that it does not degenerate into boasting. Farewell, and be sure of my favor."

The Jews took their way, cast down, but not without hope, for Beltsazar was confident that the writing would be found at Ecbatana.

After the Jews, came the embassy from the Syrians and the Ionic Greeks; then, last in the line, appeared some wild-looking men of a curious physiognomy, dressed in skins of animals. Their belts, shoulder-bands, quivers, axes, and spear-points were rudely fashioned of virgin gold, and their tall fur caps were adorned with golden ornaments. Before them walked a man in Persian dress, whose features showed that he belonged to the same race as the others. The king looked with astonishment upon the envoys. His brow grew dark, and beckoning to an usher, he said,—

"What do these men want of me? If I am not mistaken, they are some of those Massagetæ, who must soon tremble at my vengeance. Tell them, Gobryas, that a well-furnished army is now ready in the Median plain, to give them bloody answer with the sword."

The usher bowed, and replied, "These men came this morning during the sacrifices, with heavy loads of the purest gold to purchase your forgiveness. When they learned that you were holding a great festivity, they pressed me to obtain them the favor of an audience that they might tell you with what proposals they had come to your gates."

The clouded brow of the king grew clearer. With a quick glance he scanned their tall, hardy forms, and then said, "Let them come. I should like to know what terms the murderers of my father offer."

Gobryas beckoned, and the tallest and largest of them, accompanied by the man in Persian dress, approached close to the throne and began to speak with a loud voice in his own language. His companion, who, having been taken prisoner by Cyrus, had learned the Persian tongue, translated for the king the address of the envoy of the Nomads, sentence by sentence.

"We know," the latter began, "that you, mighty king, are wroth with the Massagetæ, because your father perished in war against us, which he himself had begun, though we had never offended him."

"My father was justified in punishing you," said the king, interrupting the speaker, "for your queen, Tomyris, presumed to refuse the offer of his hand."

"Be not angry with us, O king, for I say to you our whole nation approved of that refusal. A child might have seen that Cyrus wished to number our princess among his wives only that so he might appease his insatiable ambition with our lands."

Cambyzes was silent, and the envoy continued:

"Cyrus had the Araxes, our boundary river, bridged over. We had no fear, and therefore Tomyris sent him word he might have spared himself the trouble of building it, for we would wait quietly for him in our country, and leave the passage over the Araxes free to him, or else we would meet him in his own dominions. Cyrus resolved, as a prisoner told us afterwards, by the advice of Cræsus the king, to seek us on our own ground, and to overthrow us by stratagem. He sent only a small part of his army against us, and allowed them to be scattered by our darts and arrows, so that we were masters of the camp without a struggle. We thought we had conquered 'the insatiate,' as we called him, and set about feasting on his luxurious supplies; when, poisoned by that sweet drink, which we had never tasted before, and which you call wine, we had sunk into a lethargy like sleep, your whole army fell upon us and killed nearly

all our soldiers. Some you took prisoners, among them the brave Spargapises, the young son of our queen. And you remember how, when he heard that his mother was ready to make peace with you, if he were given up, the young hero bade you take off his chains, and when it was done, and he had the use of his hands again, he seized his sword and ran it through his body. When we heard of this, all of us who could bear arms, and who had escaped your swords and fetters, assembled together. Even boys and old men armed themselves and marched against your father, to avenge Spargapises' death, and to offer themselves up for the freedom of their country. We joined battle, you were defeated, Cyrus fell; Tomyris, seeing his corpse in a pool of blood, exclaimed, 'At last, insatiate one, thou art satisfied.' The company of nobles whom ye call the 'Immortals,' forced us back and recovered from the thickest of our lines the body of your father; you stood firm and fought like a lion. I remember you well. Do you know that this sword that hangs at my side was the one that gave you that purple mark of honor?"

The listening company trembled for the life of the bold speaker; but Cambyses only nodded approvingly, and said,—

"Ah, yes, I recognize you too; you rode that day a fiery-red horse, covered with ornaments of gold. We Persians know how to honor valor: that you shall learn. Never, friends, have I seen a sharper sword, never a stronger arm than his. Bow before him, for heroic greatness, whether it be found in friend or foe, deserves the respect of the brave. And you, Massagetæ, hear my counsel: go home and arm yourselves; at the recollection of your strength and courage, desire increases within me to meet you again in battle. Brave foes are better, by Mithra, than timid friends. I dismiss you without injury, but stay not in my neighborhood, lest, thinking of the vengeance I owe my father, my wrath should kindle, and your life run the risk of coming to a sudden end."

The bearded lip of the soldier curled into a bitter smile, as he answered, "We think that the soul of your father

has been bloodily avenged already; on account of his death, the only son of our queen, the pride of our people, one as lofty, as noble as Cyrus, died in his youth. Fifty thousand corpses of my countrymen are rotting on the Araxes' bank, while you lost but thirty thousand. We fought as bravely as you, though you had coats-of-mail and we but the skins of beasts; and as the last most miserable vengeance, you have killed our noble queen."

"Tomyris is no more?" exclaimed the king. "That we Persians should kill a woman! Quick, tell me what has befallen her?"

"Tomyris died ten months ago from grief, at the death of her only son, and therefore I say she died in the war with the Persians as a victim to the soul of Cyrus."

After a long pause, the king answered, "Be that as it may, I give you your choice, either submit to my sceptre and become a part of the Persian Empire, under the name of the Massagetic province, receiving with fitting respect a satrap as representative of my person, or consider yourselves as my enemies, and prepare to be compelled by force to concede what I ask. To-day you will have a kindly-disposed ruler; hereafter you may tremble before a conqueror and avenger; consider well before you answer."

"We have considered all this, and have determined that, as free children of the desert, we prefer death to slavery. Hear from my mouth the counsel of our sages: 'We Massagetæ, not through our own fault, but by the visitation of our god, the sun, have become too weak to resist the Persians; we know that you are gathering a great army against us, and we are ready to purchase peace and freedom by a yearly tribute of our treasures. But know that if you attempt to compel us by force, it will be your own loss. As soon as an army approaches the Araxes, we will, all of us, with our women and children, break up our habitations, and seek another home; for we dwell, not as you, in fixed towns and cities, but travel about on our horses, and rest beneath tents. Our gold we will take with us, and we will destroy the mines in which you could find new wealth. We know the

places where treasure sleeps, and are ready to bestow it upon you generously if you give us freedom and peace; make war upon us, and you gain a desolate steppe, and an enemy always just beyond your reach, who will be terrible to you, when once he has recovered from the losses that you have lately inflicted. Give us what we ask, and we will bring you, besides gold, five thousand swift steeds of the desert, and will be your allies when serious danger menaces your empire."

The envoy said no more.

Cambyses, looking down, reflected long, and seemed to hesitate to give his answer. At last he said,—

"We will hold a council to-day at the banquet, and to-morrow we will make answer. See well to these people, Gobryas; and to the soldier that slashed my face for me, give the best dishes from my own table."

CHAPTER XV.

LADICE'S LETTER.

WHILE all this was taking place, Nitetis was left sad and lonely in her house in the hanging-gardens. To-day, for the first time, she had taken part with the rest of the women of the palace in the royal sacrifice, and with the strange songs of an alien faith sounding in her ears, had tried to pray to her new gods.

Most of the royal seraglio saw the Egyptian princess at this solemnity for the first time, and paying little heed to what they were engaged in, devoted all their attention to her. Nitetis, disturbed by the inquisitive and malicious gaze of her rivals, distracted by the deafening music, which came echoing up from the city, touched to the quick by the remembrance of her calm devotions in the solemn sultry silence of the vast temples of her old home, when she knelt with her mother and her sister in the awful presence of her childhood's gods, now felt no

uplifting of her soul as she stood praying for the happiness and prosperity of her lover and her king, on this his natal day. Cassandane and Atossa, on their knees beside her, joined with all their heart in the songs of the Magi, which to her were empty sound, signifying nothing. These prayers, which in some places rose to very beautiful poetry, were made wearisome by an endless catalogue of the names and occupations of all the good and evil spirits. In the two Persian women, who had learned from childhood to look upon them as the most beautiful and sacred of songs, they excited the most intense devotion; but had little charm for the mind of Nitetis, accustomed as she had been to the most lovely of the Hellenic poems. She had to force her attention to the formal rites of this strange worship, lest she should expose her distraction and indifference to her watchful and suspicious companions. More than all this, just before the sacrifice she had received her first letter from Egypt: it lay even now unread on her table, and would come to her recollection at every attempt she made to pray. What news it might contain, she knew not. How did it fare with her parents, and how did Tachot bear her separation from the young prince?

When the solemnity was over, with a sigh of relief as though a great weight had been taken from her breast, she embraced Cassandane and Atossa; and, hastening home, she flew to her table on which the precious missive lay. Her maid, the same who had dressed her the first time she wore the Persian dress, received her with a significant and expectant smile, which soon changed to astonishment when her mistress, taking no notice of the attire that was lying on her toilette-table, seized the longed-for letter. Nitetis hastily broke the seal, and was just sitting down to begin the task of reading the epistle, when the maid, stepping right in front of her, exclaimed,—

“By Mithra, I do not understand you, my mistress. Something must be wrong. Has this ugly-looking piece of gray stuff a charm that makes one who looks at it blind to all else? Lay the roll aside, and look at the splendid present that the great king—may Auramazda give him

victory!—has sent you while you were at the sacrifice. Only look at the purple robe with white stripes and silver embroidery; and see this tiara of royal diamonds. Do you not know that such gifts as these mean more than common ones? Cambyses prays you,—the messenger said ‘pray,’ not ‘command,’—prays you to wear these at the feast to-day. What a rage Phædime will be in! How the other royal wives will open their eyes! They never received anything like this. Till now Cassandane, the king’s mother, has been the only woman in the whole court allowed to wear purple and diamonds. By these gifts Cambyses shows that he intends to put you on an equality with her, and acknowledge you before the world as his favorite wife and queen. Pray, pray let me put them on you. How lovely you will look! and how angry and envious all the others will be! Oh, if I could only be by when you enter the hall! Come, my mistress, let me take off your simple dress, and adorn you as befits the new queen.”

While the servant rattled on, Nitetis listened in silence, and looked at the costly gifts with a quiet smile. She was woman enough to be pleased by them, as coming from the man who was dearer to her than life, and showing, as they did, that she was more to the king than all his other wives,—yes, that Cambyses even loved her. The long-wished-for letter fell unread from her hand as she silently acceded to the wishes of the girl, who quickly finished her task.

The royal purple well became her queenly beauty, and the sparkling tiara seemed to increase in height her tall, slender form. When she first saw herself in all her array in the metallic mirror which lay on her table, her whole expression changed. It was as if part of her lord’s pride had been reflected upon herself. The lively serving-woman fell upon her knees involuntarily as the queenly gaze of her majestic mistress met her own. For a moment Nitetis looked down at her; and then, blushing with shame, she bent over, and, kindly raising her up, kissed her forehead, and, giving her a golden bracelet, desired to be left alone.

Mandane hastened almost in a run from the room, to

show her present to the under-servants; and as soon as she was gone, Nitetis sank back, full of peace and joy, into the ivory chair which stood in front of her table. With a prayer to her patron-goddess, Hathor the beautiful, she kissed the golden chain that Cambyses had given her the day of his adventure in the water. Raising the letter to her lips, she unrolled it, almost haughtily from the secret pride that she felt; and as she leaned back indolently into the purple cushions, she murmured to herself, "How happy and more than happy I am! Poor letter, your writer little thought that Nitetis would leave you lying a whole quarter of an hour on the ground."

Joyfully she began to read; but her smile soon died away, and when she had finished, the letter again fell to the floor. It was as follows:

"Ladice, spouse of Amasis and Queen of Upper and of Lower Egypt, to her daughter Nitetis, wife of the great King of Persia. If you have been, my dear daughter, so long without news of your home, it has not been our fault. The trireme, which was to take your letter to *Ægæ*, was captured by a man-of-war, or rather pirate-vessel, of the Samians, and was taken into the harbor of *Astypalæa*. The presumption of Polycrates, who seems to succeed in everything he attempts, grows daily greater. No boat is safe from his robber-ships since his victory over the Lesbians and Milesians, who had the courage to oppose this monster of pride. The sons of the deceased Pisistratus are his friends; Lygdamis is under obligations to him, and needs his help to maintain his own supremacy over the people of *Naxos*. The *Amphictyons* he has won to his side by making over to the *Apollo* of *Delos* the neighboring island of *Rhenia*. All the mercantile peoples suffer great depredations from his fifty-oared ships, as they are manned with a complement of twenty thousand men. No one dares to attack him; he is surrounded by a well-trained body-guard, and he has besides made his citadel and the fine breakwaters in the harbor absolutely impregnable. The traders who followed the successful *Colæus* to the west, and those robber-ships that know no mercy, will make *Samos*

the richest of islands, and Polycrates the most powerful of men, if, as your father says, the gods did not envy men such prosperity, and were not preparing for the tyrant a terrible fall. When my husband was told the story about the fish and the ring, of which you have of course heard, he immediately sent word to Polycrates that all friendship was at an end between them, and told him he would try and forget it, that he might be spared the pain of seeing an old friend fall into misfortune; for he felt that this must be the fate of the king of Samos. Polycrates received the message with a smile, and sent us back, with a mocking salutation, the letters which his ship had captured. So in future everything will have to be sent to you through Syria.

“You ask, perhaps, why I tell you all this, which is of so much less interest to you than news from your home. The answer to your question is: ‘To prepare you for your father’s condition.’ Would you recognize in that gloomy message to his Samian friend the cheerful, careless, happy Amasis? My husband has but too much reason to despond, and your mother’s eyes have never been dry since you went to Persia. From the sick-bed of your sister I hasten to your father, to comfort him and to guide his footsteps. I take advantage of the night to write these lines to you, though I am in much need of sleep.

“At this point I was called away by your sister’s nurses. How often has she uttered your name in her delirium! How carefully she treasures up that waxen image of you, to which the best Greek skill and art has given its wonderful resemblance! To-morrow we are going to send it to Egina, where a copy of it is to be made in gold; as the soft wax is being injured by the hot hands and feverish lips of your sister. Now, my daughter, call to your aid all your courage, which I too must do, while I attempt to tell you in order what the gods have brought upon our house. After your departure, Tachot wept almost incessantly for three days; all our words of consolation, all the advice of your father, all the sacrifices and prayers, had no power to comfort our poor child, or to make her forget her sorrow. On the fourth day,

suddenly, her tears dried: she answered all our questions obediently in a gentle voice; but the greater part of the day she sat silent at her distaff, although most of the time her hands lay in her lap, and when she did attempt anything, her once skilful fingers made sad work of the spinning. She, who used to laugh so merrily at your father's jests, heard them now with dull indifference. To my maternal admonitions she listened in painful excitement: when I would kiss her forehead, and pray her to control her sorrow, she would throw herself into my arms and hide her blushing face in my bosom; and then again she would go to her distaff and spin the threads with nervous haste, and in half an hour her hands would fall idly, and her dreamy eyes would look down at the ground, or gaze far away into vacancy. If we compelled her to take part in the feasts, she would walk absently among the guests. When we took her with us on the great pilgrimage to Bubastis, at which the Egyptian people is wont to forget its gravity and dignity, and the Nile and its banks are metamorphosed into an immense stage, on which the drunken choruses play their wild extravagant games,—when she saw here, for the first time in her life, a whole nation frolicking in uproarious mirth, she seemed to rouse herself from her dejection, though it was only to weep afresh, as she had done after your departure.

“Sadly, almost desperately, we bore her in our arms back to Sais; she looked now like some heavenly being, and, as we thought, became weaker every day; her face grew paler and paler, while through its transparent whiteness there passed now and then a flush like the color of an opening rose, or of the clouds at sunrise. Her eyes became more clear and beautiful; it seemed as though they were looking into heaven and not upon what was passing around. As her hands would grow suddenly hot, and then a cold chill pass through her, we sent for Thutmes of Thebes, the most celebrated physician for internal diseases. The experienced priest shook his head when he saw your sister, and predicted a severe illness. From that time she was unable to spin, and could speak but little. She was prescribed all kinds of

drinks: charms and conjurations were pronounced over her; the stars and oracles were questioned; rich gifts and sacrifices were offered to the gods. The priest of Hathor sent us from the island of Philæ a sacred amulet for the sick child; the priest of Osiris, a lock of the god's hair set in gold; and Neithotep instituted a grand sacrifice to our tutelary divinity, which was to bring health to your sister again. But neither the doctors, nor the prayers, nor the amulets were of any avail.

"Neithotep at last no longer concealed from me that Tachot's stars gave little hope. The holy bull of Memphis died just then; the priests, when they cut open his body, found there was no heart in it, and from the discovery predicted that a great evil was to befall Egypt. Up to this time no new Apis is to be found. It is generally believed that the gods are wroth with your father's kingdom; and the oracle of Buto has proclaimed that the immortals will not give their blessing to Egypt until all the temples built for the strange gods in the black country are laid in the dust, and those that worship them banished.

"The evil omens have not lied. Tachot was seized with a terrible fever. Nine days she hovered between life and death, and she is to-day so weak that she has to be carried, not being able to move hand or foot. During the journey to Bubastis, your father's eyes became much inflamed. Instead of giving them rest, he worked as usual from sunrise to noon, and during your sister's illness, in spite of my warnings, would never leave her couch. Let me say it at once, my daughter: his eyes grew gradually worse, and on the day that we heard of your safe arrival at Babylon, Amasis was blind. From a bright and active man, he has become an unhappy, sickly dotard. The death of the Apis, the evil constellations and oracles, broke his spirit. The darkness in which he lives has thrown a gloom over his soul. The consciousness that he cannot walk without assistance has robbed him of his firmness. The bold, self-reliant monarch will soon be nothing but the helpless tool of the priests. He passes hours in the temple of Neith, praying and offering sacrifices. He has ordered a con-

tingent of mechanics to make the tomb for his mummy, while a set of Moors are engaged in levelling to the ground the shrine of Apollo at Memphis. His own and Tachot's affliction he calls a just retribution from the gods. His visits to his child are of little comfort to her; for, instead of talking kindly to the poor little thing, he tries to convince her that she has deserved the sufferings that the immortals have sent. He endeavors, with all the force of his wonderful eloquence, to bring her to the point of forgetting the earth and earthly things, and of seeking by continual prayer and sacrifice to win the favor of Osiris and the judges of the world of spirits. In this way he tortures the soul of the suffering girl, who longs with all her heart to live. Perhaps, though Queen of Egypt, I am still too much a Greek; but death seems to me so long and life so short that I think those sages fools who by continual meditation upon gloomy Hades rob themselves of what little there is in life.

"Here I was again interrupted. Thutmes had come to see his patient. He gives little hope; he even seems to wonder that her delicate frame has been able to resist the assaults of death as long as it has. 'She would have died long since,' he told me yesterday, 'if she had not made up her mind to live; and a feverish longing keeps her up. Should she resign this desire of life, she will pass away as one dreams one's self asleep. If her longing is gratified, she may perhaps live some time, though it is not probable; but if it remains unfulfilled, this passion, which now keeps her alive, will gradually consume her.'

"Can you guess the cause of all this? Our Tachot has allowed herself to be fascinated by your husband's brother. I will not believe, as Ameneman the priest does, that he used some magical means; for the beauty and grace that Bartia possessed were quite enough to win the heart of a guileless child like Tachot. But her passion is so intense that I am often inclined to think that there was something more than natural in its cause. Just before you went away I perceived that your sister was attached to the young Persian. Her first tears we ascribed to your departure; but her silent reveries showed Ibycus, who was then with us, that she was deeply in

love. Once, when she was sitting dreamily at her spindle, he sang to me the love-song of Sappho,—

“Oh, my sweet mother, 'tis in vain;
I cannot weave as once I wove,
So 'wildered aro my heart and brain
With thinking of that youth I love.”*

“She grew very pale as she listened. ‘Did you write that song yourself, Ibycus?’

“‘Oh, no; Sappho the Lesbian sang it fifty years ago.’

“‘Fifty years ago?’ repeated Tachot, thoughtfully.

“‘Love is the same always,’ answered the poet. ‘As Sappho loved fifty years ago, so all have loved since the earliest ages, so will they love in the thousands of years yet to come.’

“My child smiled as if she held it true, and sang the song softly to herself, as she sat idly at her wheel. In spite of all this, she shunned every question that could remind her of him she loved. But in her fever-fits her lips were never tired of repeating Bartia's name, and when she came to herself and we told her of her delirious fancies, she revealed all, saying, solemnly, as she gazed as if inspired towards heaven, ‘I know that I shall not die till I see him again.’

“Lately we had her carried into the temple, because she felt a longing to pray there; and when her devotions were over, and as we were passing through its court, she noticed a little girl, who was telling her companions some story with great earnestness. She ordered the bearers of the litter to set it down and to bring the child to her.

“‘What are you saying?’ she asked the child.

“‘Oh, I am only telling the others something about my eldest sister.’

“‘May I hear it?’ then asked Tachot, so gently that the child began her story without fear. ‘Batau, my sister's bridegroom, returned home yesterday from Thebes unexpectedly; when the star of Isis was rising, he came suddenly into the house where Cerimama was playing draughts with father,—and what do you think he brought her? A lovely golden bridal crown.’

* Thomas Moore.

“Tachot kissed her and made her a present of a beautiful fan. When we reached home, she said to me, with a smile, ‘You know, mother dear, that the words of the children in the temple-court are considered oracles. If the little girl does not play me false, he must come. Did you not hear how he will bring a bridal crown? Oh, mother, I know surely that I shall see him again.’

“When I asked her yesterday if she had any message for you, she told me to send you a thousand greetings and kisses, and to tell you that when she was better she would write to you herself, for she had much to confide. She brought me, in a little while, the note that accompanies this, and which she finished with a great effort.

“And now I must hasten to end my letter, for the messenger has been kept waiting a long time. I wish I had something pleasant to tell you; but wherever I look everything is sorrowful. Your brother is more under the control of the priests than ever, and, with Neithotep for a guide, acts as regent for your father. Amasis gives Psamtic complete license, and says that he cares little whether the prince occupies his place a few days sooner or later. He did not stand in your brother's way when the latter carried off by force from the house of Rhodope the children of Phanes, the former commander of the body-guard, and he even sanctioned a negotiation with the two hundred thousand soldiers who, on account of the preference shown the Ionians, emigrated to Ethiopia in the times of Psamtic I., the object of this parley with them being to dismiss the Greeks if these others were willing to come back. The whole thing ended in nothing, and Psamtic has deeply offended the Hellenes by his treatment of the children of Phanes. Aristomachus threatened to leave Egypt, with ten thousand of the soldiers, when the boy was murdered by Psamtic's order. Afterwards the Spartan suddenly disappeared, and no one knows whither he has gone, though the Greeks have been bribed by large sums of money to stay. Amasis remains quiet, occupied only in prayers and sacrifices; while his son insults all classes of the people, and tries by unworthy means to appease them again. Both the Hellenic and Egyptian officers,

as well as the nomarchs, have assured me that the present condition of things cannot last. No one knows what to expect from a ruler who commands to-day what he forbade yesterday, and who has severed the bond that united the people of Egypt with their king.

"Farewell, my daughter; think of your unhappy friend, your mother. Forgive your parents if you should ever learn what they have long kept secret from you. Pray for Tachot, and give Cressus and the young Persians our greetings, and your sister's to Bartia. She asks him to regard it as the legacy of one on her death-bed. If you could but give her some sign that he has not entirely forgotten her. Farewell, and be happy in your beautiful new home."

CHAPTER XVI.

BOGES AND HIS WARDS.

It was by one of those curious turns of fate, which bring utter disappointment after intense happiness, that Nitetis was now so miserably unhappy. The letter that she had looked for so joyously was destined to pour bitter drops of anguish into her full cup of bliss. At one stroke it had forever destroyed the fairer part of her existence, the happy recollections of her own loved home, and of the companions of her childhood and youth. As she sat in her gorgeous dress weeping, she thought of nothing but her mother's misery, her father's blindness, and the illness of her sister. The fair future of fortune, power, and love that lay smiling before her vanished from her eyes. The chosen bride of Cambyses forgot her expectant lover; the future queen of Persia was thinking only of the desolation of Egypt's royal house.

The sun had long passed mid-day when her maid, Mandane, entered the room to put the final touches to her mistress's toilette. "She is asleep," thought the girl. "I

may as well let her rest another quarter of an hour. The festival has tired her ; and she must be perfectly well and fresh at the banquet to-night, in order that she may outshine the others as the moon does the stars."

Without being seen, she stole out of the room, whose windows gave a lovely prospect over the hanging-gardens, the vast city, the river, and the fruitful Babylonian fields. She ran quickly to a flower-bed to pick some roses, and her eyes were so riveted upon her new bracelet, whose jewels sparkled in the noonday sun, that she did not notice a gaudily-dressed man, who was peering with outstretched neck into one of the windows of the room where Nitetis was weeping. The listener turned quickly round upon the girl, and said, in a high treble voice,—

"Good-morning, fair Mandane."

The maid started, and exclaimed, as she recognized Boges, "It is not kind of you, sir, to frighten a poor girl so. I should have fainted if I had seen you before I heard you. Women's voices here do not startle me, but a man in this solitude is like a swan in the desert."

Boges, though he saw the sneer in the allusion to his voice, smiled benevolently, and said, rubbing his fat hands,—

"It is a shame, indeed, for a beautiful young dove like you to be cooped up in this lonely nest ; but be patient, my darling, your mistress will soon be queen, and will find out some fine young fellow for you. He! he! You will not mind living alone with him, as you do with your beautiful Egyptian!"

"My mistress is more beautiful than is agreeable to some people ; and I have commissioned no one to get me a husband," she answered, snappishly. "I can find one without you."

"Who doubts it? Such a pretty little phiz attracts men as a worm does a fish."

"I don't fish for them,—at any rate, not for those of your sort."

"I believe you ; I believe you," chuckled the eunuch ; "but tell me, my little treasure, why are you so severe with me? Have I ever done you any harm? Was it

not I who got you this place? Am I not a countryman of yours,—a Mede?"

"Are we not both human, and have we not both ten fingers, and have we not both a nose in the middle of our face? Half the people here are Medes; and if they were all my friends because we come from the same country, I ought to be queen to-morrow. And as for my place in the house of the Egyptian, you did not get it for me at all; I have to thank the high-priest, Oropastes, who recommended me to Cassandane. We people here have nothing to ask of you."

"What are you talking about, my dear? Don't you know that no servant can be appointed without my consent?"

"Oh, I know all that; but——"

"But you women are an ungrateful set, who do not deserve our kindness."

"You forget that you are speaking to the daughter of an honorable family."

"Oh, I know your whole history, my lambkin. Your father was a Magus, and your mother the daughter of a Magus. They both died when you were young, and left you to the care of the 'Destur' Ixabates, the father of Oropastes, who had you educated with his own children. When you were given your ear-rings, Gaumata, the brother of Oropastes,—oh, you need not get so red, Gaumata is a beautiful name!—Gaumata, I say, fell in love with your rosy face, and wanted to wed you when he was only nineteen. Gaumata and Mandane: how well they sound together! Mandane and Gaumata. If I were a poet, I would call my hero Gaumata, and my heroine Mandane."

"Enough of this!" cried the girl, flushing with shame, and stamping furiously upon the ground.

"Now you are angry with me, because I find that your names go well together. You had better be angry with the haughty Oropastes, who dispatched his young brother to Rhagæ and sent you here that you might forget each other."

"You slander my benefactor," she answered, indignantly.

"Cut out my tongue if I am not telling you the truth.

Oropastes separated you and his brother, because he had something better in view for the handsome Gaumata than a marriage with the poor orphan of a petty priest. Amytis or Menische would suit him much better as a sister-in-law; a helpless child like you, who owe all you have to his bounty, would only be an obstacle to his ambitious plans. He wants, between ourselves, to be viceroy during the war against the Massagetæ, and would give much to connect himself by marriage with the Achæmenides. At his age a man does not want any new wives; but his brother is young and handsome, and very like Prince Bartia too, some think."

"That is true. Why, only think, when we went to meet my mistress, and I saw Bartia for the first time from the window, I thought it was Gaumata. They are as like each other as twins, and are the handsomest men in the whole kingdom."

"How you blush, my little rose! but, indeed, there never was such a deceptive resemblance. When I saw the brother of the high-priest this morning——"

"Gaumata here?" she asked, with passionate eagerness. "Is he really here, or are you laughing at me?"

"By Mithra, my little dove, I this very day kissed him on the forehead, and I had to tell him ever so much about his little treasure, for I am too weak to be able to resist the lovely blue eyes of this golden-haired beauty,—this cherry-cheeked boy. Spare your blushes! Keep them, my pomegranate-flower, till I have told you all. In future you will not be so hard on poor Boges, and will see that he has a good heart, full of friendliness for Mandane, his beautiful little shrewish countrywoman."

"I trust you not," answered the girl, interrupting his assurances. "I have been warned against your smooth tongue, and I see no reason for all this apparent interest in my affairs."

"Did you ever see that before?" asked the eunuch, holding up a white ribbon, artistically embroidered with little golden flames.

"The last gift I worked for him!" exclaimed Mandane.

"The token I asked Gaumata for; I knew well that

you would not trust me. Who ever saw a captive love his keeper?"

"Quick, quick! tell me, what does my old playfellow want of me? Look! it is growing red in the west. Evening is coming on, and I must go dress my mistress for the feast."

"I will be brief," said the eunuch, suddenly becoming so grave that Mandane was terrified. "If you do not believe that from regard to you I am exposing myself to great danger, then consider that I am assisting your love-affair in order to humble the pride of that Oropastes who threatens to shut me out from the king's favor. For all the intrigues of the chief of the Magi, you shall and must be the wife of Gaumata, as surely as my name is Boges. To-morrow night, after the rising of the star of Tistar, your lover will come to you. I will see that all the guards are removed, so that he shall run no risk, and he may remain an hour with you,—remember, an hour only,—and he will explain all the rest to you then. Your mistress, I know beyond all doubt, will be the favorite wife of Cambyses; then she can forward your marriage with Gaumata, for she loves you and knows no praise too high for your fidelity and skill. To-morrow night, when the star of Tistar rises," he continued, in his former bantering tone, "the sun of your good fortune begins to shine. You look down, and have nothing to say. Gratitude closes your little mouth, eh? Am I right? I beseech you, my dove, be not so dumb when it concerns the praising of poor Boges to your powerful mistress. Shall I greet the handsome Gaumata? Shall I say to him that you have not forgotten him, and are joyfully awaiting his coming? Alas, it is beginning to grow dark; I must go and see that the women are attired properly for the great birthday feast. Oh, one other thing: Gaumata has to leave Babylon to-morrow. Oropastes is afraid of his attempting to see you again, and has ordered him to return to Rhagæ as soon as the celebration is over. You are still silent? Well, then, I cannot do anything for you and the poor boy. I shall attain my end without you, and it will be better for you to forget your love altogether. Farewell!"

The maiden fought a hard battle with herself. She suspected that Boges was tricking her. A voice told her to decline the rendezvous. Virtue and prudence gained the upper hand, and she was just about to exclaim, "Tell him I will not see him," when her eyes fell upon the silk ribbon which she had once worked for her handsome lover. Happy pictures of her childhood and of those short moments of intoxicating love, rushed upon her mind. Love, folly, longing, won the day over virtue, suspicion, and prudence. Before Boges could say farewell, she cried, almost involuntarily, as she ran towards the house, "I shall expect him."

Boges passed with quick steps through the blossoming paths of the hanging-gardens. On the parapet of the lofty structure he stopped, and carefully opened a secret trap-door that served to conceal the hidden staircase which the royal builder had caused to be placed in one of the pillars that supported the garden, in order that he might pass unperceived from the bank of the river to the dwelling of his wife. The door moved softly on its hinges, and when Boges had shut it again and scattered over it some of the river-shells which covered the walks of the garden, it became invisible even to those who knew of its existence.

The eunuch, according to his habit, rubbed his hands, and, smiling pleasantly, murmured to himself, "It must succeed: the girl falls into the snare,—her lover obeys my nod,—the old staircase is practicable. Nitetis has been weeping bitterly on this joyous day,—the blue lily blooms to-morrow night. Yes, yes, my little arrangement must succeed. Pretty Egyptian kitten, your velvet paw will be hanging to-morrow night in the trap that has been set for you by the poor despised eunuch who was to give you no orders."

At these words a gleam of malice flashed from the eye of the seraglio-keeper. On the great steps he met the eunuch Neriglissar, who, as upper gardener, lived in the hanging-gardens.

"How does the blue lily thrive?"

"It is unfolding splendidly," answered the gardener, kindled into enthusiasm at the mention of his favorite

flower. "To-morrow, when the star of Tistar rises, it will be, as I promised you, in full bloom. My Egyptian mistress will have great pleasure from it,—she loves flowers. And I hope you will tell the king and the nobles how successful my industry has been in bringing this plant to perfection; it only shows itself in full bloom one night in ten years. Tell the noble Achæmenides, and bring them here."

"Your wish shall be fulfilled," said Boges, graciously. "I would not reckon, if I were you, upon the king's coming, for I fancy he will not visit the hanging-gardens before his marriage with the Egyptian. But some of the Achæmenides will certainly do so. They are so fond of gardens and plants that they would not miss it on any account. Perhaps Croesus may come with them, and, though he understands less about these things than the Persian flower-fanciers, he is always able to appreciate what is beautiful."

"Yes, bring him with you, and he will thank you, for my queen of the night is more beautiful than any plant that ever grew in the royal gardens. You have seen in the tank the buds surrounded with the green leaves, but when it is fully out, it is like an immense rose, and blue as heaven itself. My flower——"

The enthusiastic gardener would have gone on indefinitely with his panegyric, but Boges, with a benevolent salutation, left him, and, hastening down the steps, got into the two-wheeled wagon which was waiting there, and ordered his driver to go to the gate of the garden that surrounded the seraglio.

The harem of Cambyses was full of stir and animation, for Boges had commanded that all the women of the court, before the banquet began, should be taken to the bath; and so, when the guardian of the royal wives hastened to the wing of the palace in which was the bathing-place for the women, he could hear, even before he reached it, the confused noise of screaming, laughing, gabbling, giggling voices.

In the wide room, which was heated almost to suffocation, more than three hundred of his wards were running about. Hidden in a thick mist of steam, and looking like

cloud-pictures, the half-naked figures, their thin silken garments, heavy with moisture, clinging to their delicate forms, were hurrying to and fro over the hot marble floor of the bath, from whose roof the warm drops fell dripping upon the pavement below. Here lay groups of voluptuously fair women, by tens and twenties, engaged in lively gossip; there were two royal wives quarrelling like naughty children; one was screaming with pain and anger from a blow from a slipper; another lay like a log, in lazy contemplation, on the warm, moist floor. Six Armenian girls were standing together and singing, in clear voices, a sportive love-song in the language of their country, while a group of golden-haired Persians were so hard at work abusing Nitetis, that one would have supposed that the beautiful Egyptian was a bugaboo of the kind that children are frightened with. Through all the hubbub naked slaves were running from place to place, carrying on their heads warm robes to throw over their mistresses. The shrill cries of the eunuchs, who kept guard over the door of the room, and who were urging the bathers to greater haste, the noisy voices calling for the slaves, and the pungent perfumes which mingled with the steam, made the wild confusion almost overpowering.

A quarter of an hour later, the same party furnished a very different spectacle. The women, their hair reeking with odorous moisture, were lying lazily on soft cushions around the walls of an immense room; busy slaves were rubbing away every trace of moisture from their soft bodies; silk coverings were being spread over their beautiful tired limbs; and a crowd of eunuchs took care to prevent any one, more mischievously disposed than the rest, from disturbing the dreaming repose of the wearied bathers; but the most potent inducement to quietness and good behavior was the fear of being shut out from the feast.

Almost an hour had gone by, when the sudden boom of a gong changed the whole aspect of the place. The prostrate figures suddenly sprang from their cushions; a bevy of slaves hurried into the room; ointments and perfumes were poured over the fair concubines, their luxuriant hair was skilfully plaited and adorned with precious stones;

costly ornaments, silken and woollen garments of every color of the rainbow, were brought in, together with rich, golden girdles, and shoes stiff with pearls and rubies.

The toilette of most of the women was completed when Boges entered the apartment. Deafening screams of delight met him the moment he was seen; twenty of the concubines joined hands and danced around their smiling overseer, singing his praises in a rude song of their own making. To-day the king was wont to grant every reasonable request of his wives, so that when the dancers had broken up their chain, a herd of petitioners rushed upon Boges, stroking his cheeks and kissing his fat hands, urging demands of every kind upon him, and trying to wheedle him into mediating for them. The smiling despot of the harem, putting his fingers to his ears in utter despair, pressed back the laughing, mischievous suppliants, assuring the Median Amytis that Esther the Phœnician should be punished, and Esther, that Amytis should not escape chastisement; promising to Parmys a more beautiful costume than that of Parisatys, and to Parisatys a more beautiful one than that of Parmys; and when he could no longer defend himself, putting a gold pipe to his mouth, he gave a shrill whistle that acted like a charm on his subjects; the uplifted hands sank in an instant, the bustling feet at once stood still, the open lips suddenly closed, and the din subsided into utter stillness. Whoever failed to hearken to the note of this little instrument, which was more significant than the reading of any riot-act or a "Peace, in the king's name," was certain of condign punishment.

Boges watched the effect with a self-satisfied smile, and, bestowing most benevolent glances upon the assembly, assured them, in a flowery speech, that he would lay all the wishes of his sweet white doves before the king. Then he commanded them to place themselves in two long rows. The women submitted immediately and allowed themselves to be inspected like soldiers at a drill or the slaves at a sale. Boges expressed himself pleased with them for the most part: for one he ordered more paint; for another, some white powder to hide the flesh upon her face; this one's hair he ordered to be raised

higher; for that, he advised a darker tint for the eye-brows; and for this, more ointment on her lips.

When the review was over, he left the chamber, to betake himself to Phædime, who, being a legitimate wife of Cambyses, like all others of the same rank, had separate apartments. The fallen favorite, the disgraced daughter of the Achæmenides, had been long awaiting the eunuch. She was gorgeously dressed and loaded down with costly ornaments: from a small tiara floated a thick veil of gold-embroidered crape, and around it was wound a blue-and-white turban, the token of her princely origin. She was certainly beautiful, though she was disfigured by that corpulence which is the almost inevitable result of the idleness of harem life; her hair, which hung in waves around her temples, was luxuriant and golden.

When Boges entered the room she sprang trembling towards him, and, glancing first at the mirror and then at the eunuch, she demanded, excitedly, "Do I look well? Will he think so?"

Boges, with his habitual leer, replied, "In my eyes you always look well, my golden peacock; you would please the king too, could he see you as I see you. As you exclaimed, 'Will he think so?' I never saw you look so beautiful,—your passion made your blue eyes as dark as the night of Angramainius, and hate curled your lip and let those teeth be seen that are whiter than the snow of Demavend."

Perceptibly flattered, and trying to assume the same expression a second time; Phædime exclaimed, "Let us go to the table at once: I tell you, Boges, that my eyes will flash yet more darkly and my teeth gleam whiter when I see the Egyptian sitting in the place that belongs to me."

"She'll not have it long."

"Then your scheme succeeds? Oh, speak, Boges! do not conceal from me any longer what you are attempting. I will be as silent as the dead, and will help you."

"I must not stay chattering here; but I will tell you, to sweeten this bitter evening for you, that all goes well, and that the pit into which our enemy is to fall is already prepared. I will soon place my golden Phædime upon

her old seat,—ay, higher, perhaps,—if she will only obey me.”

“Tell me what I am to do. I am ready for anything.”

“Well spoken, my valiant lioness; follow me, and all will be well. If I demand what is hard, your reward shall be glorious in proportion. Oppose me not, for we have not a moment to lose. Take off all that superfluous finery, and hang nothing around your neck except the chain, which was the king’s wedding-present; instead of these gay robes put on plain, dark garments, and prostrate yourself before the Egyptian as you do before Casandane the queen-mother.”

“Impossible!”

“Not a word! quick! quick! take off all these trappings. That is right; if you will but obey, we are certain of success; the neck of the whitest Peri is dark beside yours.”

“But——”

“When your turn comes to ask a petition of the king, say that you have ceased to wish for anything since the time that the sun of your life has taken away his light from you.”

“Good!”

“If your father asks how it is with you, weep violently.”

“I will not fail in that.”

“You must do it in such a way that all the Achæmenides may see you.”

“But the disgrace!”

“No disgrace at all; only the way to rise again. Wash this red paint from your face; let it be as pale as powder can make it.”

“I shall need to do so to conceal my blushes. You are asking a hard thing of me, Boges; but I will obey if you will only give me the reasons for it.”

“Quick, girl, bring your mistress her new dark-green dress.”

“I shall look like a slave,” pleaded Phædime.

“True beauty is always beautiful, even in rags.”

“How the Egyptian will outshine me!”

“All the world will see that you do not intend to cope with her; they will say, ‘If Phædime were only attired like this haughty woman, she would be just as beautiful.’”

“But I cannot bow down to her.”

“You must.”

“You will humiliate and ruin me.”

“Short-sighted fool, hear my reasons, then, and obey me. It is most important to excite the Achæmenides against our enemy. How enraged your grandfather Intaphernes, how furious your father Otanes, will be when they see you in the dust before a stranger! Their outraged pride will make them our allies, and even if they are too ‘noble,’ as they call it, to conspire against a woman, they will rather help us, if we require them, than stand in our way. When the Egyptian is destroyed, then, if you do as I tell you, the king will remember your pale cheeks, your humility, your self-abasement: the Achæmenides, and even the Magi, will beseech him to take one of his own race for his queen. What woman in Persia boasts higher birth than you, and who else than my many-colored bird of Paradise, my beautiful rose, Phædime, will receive the purple? Who that is afraid of being thrown, will ever learn to ride? And she who hopes to rise must not fear to stoop.”

“I will obey,” answered the princess.

“Then we must conquer,” said the eunuch. “Now your eyes are flashing again darkly, as they ought to do. As I love you, my queen, the king will look upon you once more, when the dogs and birds are gorging themselves on the delicate flesh of the Egyptian; and for the first time for many months, shall open your chamber-doors in the quiet night. Here, Armorges, order the other women to get ready, and take them to the litters; I will go on and show them their places.”

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FALL OF THE NEW QUEEN.

THE chief of the waiters met the guests as they entered the hall, and, assisted by some other noble chamberlains, showed them their places. When all were seated, a blast of the trumpets announced the approach of the king. As soon as he entered the hall, all the guests rose and received their ruler with shouts of "Hail to the king." A purple Sardis carpet, over which he and Cassandane alone passed, led to his place. The blind mother of the king, conducted by Crœsus, went before her son and took a seat at the head of the table, above even the golden chair of Cambyses. At the king's left were his legitimate wives: Nitetis sat next him, next to her Atossa, and next Atossa the plainly-dressed, pallid Phœdime, and next to her the eunuch Boges: then came the high-priest Oropastes, a few other Magi of high rank, the satraps of several provinces, among whom was the Jew Belt-sazar, and, besides these, a herd of Persians, Medes, and eunuchs, who filled high positions in the state. To the king's right sat Bartia, after him Crœsus, Hystaspes, Gobryas, Araspes, and other Achæmenides, according to their age and name. Some of the concubines sat at the far end of the table, others stood opposite the king for the purpose of enlivening the feast by songs and dances; behind them stood the eunuchs, to see that they did not raise their eyes towards the men.

The king's first look was at Nitetis, who, in all the splendor and dignity of a queen, sat pale but indescribably beautiful at his side, and as he did so their eyes met. Cambyses felt that from those of his bride passionate love looked forth, though, with the strong instinct of affection, he noticed that some trouble, unknown to him, had befallen her. "I will ask her later," thought the king, "what it is; my subjects must not see how dear

she is to me." He kissed his mother's forehead and his sister's, and Bartia's also, and, giving the same greeting to his nearest kinsmen, said a short prayer, in which he thanked the gods for their grace, prayed for a happy new year for himself and all the Persians, named the enormous sum which he gave this day as a largesse to the people, and then ordered the ushers to bring into his presence those who had any reasonable request to make. None of the suppliants went away dissatisfied, each the day before having laid his petition before the high-chamberlain, who was to decide upon its admissibility. In like manner the wishes of the women were heard by the eunuchs before they could be submitted to the king.

After the men had finished, Boges led the crowd of women up to the king, Cassandane only remaining sitting. Atossa, with Nitetis, headed the procession. Following the princesses came Phædime, with a beautiful woman, magnificently dressed, who had been placed by Boges next to Phædime in order that she might make the simplicity of the fallen favorite's costume all the more conspicuous.

Intaphernes and Otanes, as Boges had prophesied, looked darkly at the daughter of their house, so pale and wretched on this day of splendor. Cambyses, recollecting from former days Phædime's extravagant love of dress, gazed, half angrily, half in astonishment, at the plain costume and pallid features of the high-born princess. His brow darkened, and he demanded, irritably,—

"What is the meaning of these beggarly rags at my table on the day of my feast? Have you so little knowledge of propriety as to appear before your king in this costume? By Mithra, if it were another day, and if I did not respect you as the child of my honored kinsman, I would have you taken back to the harem, to reflect in solitude upon the behavior befitting my subjects."

These words made her task easier; and, weeping loudly and bitterly, she looked up to her angry lord so imploringly that the king's vexation was changed to compassion, and he asked, as he lifted her up,—

“Have you any wish in your heart?”

“What is there for me to wish, since my sun has withdrawn his light?” she answered, with sobs.

Cambyzes shrugged his shoulders. “Is there nothing that you wish? Once I could dry your tears with gifts; ask, therefore, for a golden consolation.”

“Phædime wishes nothing more; for whom does she need adornments, now that her king and husband turns from her the light of his eyes?”

“I am sorry, then, I can do nothing for you,” answered the king, as he turned away.

The advice of Boges to put on the enamel was good, for beneath it her cheeks glowed with anger and shame; but she controlled herself, and, obeying the command of the eunuch, bowed as low and respectfully before Nitetis as she had ever done before the queen-mother, and, in the sight of all the Achæmenides, her tears flowed thick and fast.

Otanes and Intaphernes bit their lips to hide the wrath they felt at the humiliation of their kinswoman,—of her who was the daughter of the one and the grandchild of the other; and many a son of Achæmenes looked with keen sympathy at the unhappy Phædime, and with suppressed rage at the beautiful stranger.

All the ceremonies were at last over, and the banqueting began. In front of the king, in a golden basket and surrounded by all kinds of fruit, lay a huge pomegranate. He noticed it, and, examining the unusually large fruit with the look of a connoisseur, asked,—

“Who raised this wonderful apple?”

“Thy servant Oropastes,” answered the chief priest, bowing low. “For many years I have practised gardening; and I have presumed to lay this lordly fruit, the finest success of my toils, at thy feet.”

“I thank you,” exclaimed the king; “my friends, this pomegranate makes my choice of viceroy much easier in case we go to war. By Mithra, he who can attend to a little tree so carefully will do as well in greater things. What a fruit! Who ever saw its like? Again I thank you, Oropastes; and, as a king’s thanks should not be in words alone, I name you to-day viceroy of the

whole kingdom in the event of war. Yes, friends, we will no longer dream away our time in lazy sloth. The Persian loses his cheerfulness when he has no fighting to do."

A murmur of applause passed through the lines of nobles. "Victory to the king!" sounded again. The anger quickly forgotten was caused by Phædime's humiliation. Thoughts of battle, visions of immortal glory, of victorious crowns, and recollections of past achievements, wrought up the joy of the feast to a still greater pitch.

The king, though himself more moderate than usual, plied them with toasts, rejoicing at the noisy merriment and the overflowing eagerness for war that his heroes showed, and even more at the lovely beauty of the Egyptian, who sat at his side pale and exhausted from the excitement of the past day and the unaccustomed weight of her tiara. Never had he been so happy as on this day. What was lacking to him? What could he further wish, to whom the gods had given, besides all his other treasures, the bliss of love which his heart had pined for? His sternness seemed to soften almost to benevolence,—his inflexible rigor to friendly good nature,—when he called to Bartia,—

"Now, brother, have you forgotten my promise? Do you not know that to-day you are sure of receiving anything you ask? That is right: empty the cup, and strengthen your courage. See that you do not ask for a trifle. I am in the mood to grant great favors. Tell me secretly what it is you want. Come nearer. I am curious to know what it is the happiest youth in all my empire can so long for that he blushes like a girl when one refers to it."

Bartia, whose cheeks indeed glowed, bent smiling towards his brother's ear, and told him in a low whisper the whole story of his love. Sappho's father had helped to defend his native city, Phoecea, against the army of Cyrus, began the young man, shrewdly, as a preface, saying truthfully enough that his lady-love was the daughter of an Hellenic soldier of good birth, though he did not think it necessary to mention the mercantile un-

dertakings by which Glaucus had amassed his fortune. The prince described to his brother the grace, the refinement of his betrothed, and her love for him; and was just calling on Cræsus for his testimony, when the king interrupted him, saying, as he kissed his forehead,—

“Spare your words, my brother, and follow the impulse of your heart. I know the power of love, and I will help you to obtain our mother’s consent.”

Bartia, overcome by gratitude and bliss, threw himself at his royal brother’s feet; but the latter, raising him up kindly, said, turning especially to Nitetis and Cassandane,—

“Listen all: the tree of Cyrus will put forth new blossoms, for our brother, Bartia, has resolved to give up his unwedded life, so hateful to the gods. In a few days he will go to your country, Nitetis, to bring back another jewel from the Nile to our mountain-home.”

“What is the matter, sister?” exclaimed Atossa, before Cambyses had done speaking, as she sprinkled with wine the forehead of the Egyptian, who had grown ghastly pale.

“What was it?” asked Cassandane, when the royal bride again recovered herself.

“Joy, happiness, Tachot,” stammered Nitetis.

Cambyses, like his sister, had sprung to her help. When she was restored to consciousness, he told her to take some wine, and then went on with his story.

“Bartia is going to your land, my spouse, to bring back from Naucratis, on the Nile, the granddaughter of a certain Rhodope, and daughter of a noble Greek soldier, who was originally a citizen of gallant Phocæa.

“What is it?” exclaimed the king’s mother.

“What is the matter with you?” asked Atossa, in an anxious, almost reproachful, tone.

“Nitetis!” cried Cræsus, warningly, to his pupil.

But it came too late, for the cup which Cambyses gave his beloved dropped from her hand, and fell ringing upon the floor. The looks of all turned in painful suspense to the king, who, with quivering lip and clinched fists, had sprung from his seat. Nitetis looked up pleadingly to the face of her betrothed; but he, as if

he wished to avoid her gaze, turned away his head and, in a hoarse voice, cried,—

“Take the women to their rooms, Boges: I want them no longer. Let the carouse begin. Pleasant sleep to you, mother, and hereafter do not suckle adders with your heart’s blood; a pleasant sleep to you too, Egyptian, and pray the gods to make you a cleverer actress. To-morrow to the chase, good friends. Some wine here, lackey; fill the great cup,—but taste it, taste it carefully, for I fear poison to-day, for the first time: hearest thou, Egyptian? I fear poison; and all drugs and poisons,—ha! ha!—every child knows, come from Egypt.”

Nitētis left the room, more tottering than walking. Boges accompanied her and kept urging the litter-bearers to greater speed. Arrived at the hanging-gardens, he consigned her to the eunuchs who had been watching her house, and then, as he took his leave, rubbing his hands and chuckling softly, he said, in a confidential manner very different from his former respect,—

“Dream of the handsome Bartia and his Egyptian mistress, my pretty white kitten of the Nile. Have you no message for the beautiful boy whose infatuation overcame you so? Remember, the poor Boges will gladly be the go-between; the despised Boges wishes you well; the humble Boges will grieve to see the proud palm of Sais fall; the prophet Boges predicts a speedy return to Egypt, or a soft rest in the black earth of Babylon; the good Boges wishes you a quiet sleep. Behave yourself well, my broken blossom, my bright-colored adder who has stung herself, my pine-apple that has dropped from the stem.”

“Shameless wretch!” exclaimed the indignant princess.

“Thank you,” answered the grinning villain.

“Your conduct shall be reported.”

“What amiability!”

“Out of my sight!” cried Nitētis.

“I obey your august commands,” whispered the eunuch, as if he were breathing a love-secret into her ear.

She shrank back, disgusted and terrified at his mockery, whose significance she clearly saw, and turned away from Boges as she hurried into the house; but he called after her,—

“Think of me, my beautiful queen, think of me; all that befalls you in the next few days will be a love-gift from the poor despised Boges.”

As soon as she had gone he changed his tone, and ordered the guards, in a stern, imperious manner, to keep careful watch over the hanging-gardens. “The one among you who allows any man, except me, to enter here will be punished with death. No one, do you hear? No one; least of all shall any messenger from the queen-mother, Atossa, or any of the other high people set foot on these steps. If Cræsus or Oropastes ask to speak with the Egyptian, send them off. Do you understand? I say again that you have lived your last if you let yourselves be seduced into disobedience by bribes or promises. No one must enter these gardens without my express order given by word of mouth. You know me, I fancy. Take these staters as a reward for your hard service, and hear me swear by Mithra that I will not spare the negligent or disobedient.”

The guards bowed low, and were prepared to obey their orders, for they knew that he was not jesting when he threatened in that way, and guessed that something was at stake when the miserly Boges flung about his staters so recklessly.

The same litter that had borne Nitetis home took the eunuch back to the feasting-hall. The wives of the king had all gone, and a few only of the concubines were standing in their appointed places, singing their monotonous songs to the men, who paid them no attention. The revellers had long since forgotten all about the fainting-fit, and the scene it had caused; and each fresh bumper served to increase the noise and confusion of the drunkards. The sacredness of the place and the presence of the king seemed to have passed out of their minds. Here one besotted banqueter was shrieking in drunken merriment; there two soldiers were embracing each other with intoxicated affection; there an inexperienced drinker was being carried out by slaves; yonder an old hand was seizing the jar instead of the cup, to empty it at a draught, amid the applause of his neighbors.

At the head of the table sat the king, pale as death,

and staring vacantly into his glass ; whenever he caught sight of his brother he would clinch his fists ; he avoided speaking to Bartia, and even left his questions unanswered. The longer he thought about it, the more sure he was that the Egyptian had betrayed him, that her love for him was assumed, and that her heart was Bartia's. What a miserable game had been played with him ! How deep-rooted must have been the faithlessness of this accomplished hypocrite when the mere news that his brother loved another not only robbed her of her usual arts, but had even made her faint utterly away ! Otanes, the father of Phædime, had cried, as Nitetis left the room, "These Egyptian women seem to have a great deal of sympathy for the love-affairs of their brothers-in-law ; the Persians are less generous with theirs, and keep it for their husbands." The proud Cambyses pretended not to have heard this, and tried, after the ostrich fashion, to shut his eyes and ears that he might not perceive the looks and whispers of his guests, which told him of his betrayal. Bartia could not be an accomplice in her guilt ; it was she who loved him, and perhaps all the more intensely that it was a passion unreturned. Had he harbored the slightest suspicion against his brother, he would have killed him on the spot ; Bartia was innocent of any part in his betrayal and misery, but still he was the cause of all this, and the old jealousy, which had only slumbered in Cambyses' heart, again returned, like the relapse in an illness, with redoubled violence.

The king kept pondering all the while how to punish the criminal ; her death would not appease his vengeance, he craved something worse for her than that. Should he send her back in shame and disgrace to Egypt ? No ; she loved her home, and would be received by her parents with open arms. Should he, after she had confessed her guilt, for compel her to confess he would,—should he shut her up in solitary confinement, or hand her over to Boges to be a servant to the concubines ? Yes, that was the thing ; that would be the most utter misery for her. He said to himself,—

"Bartia must be sent away, for fire and water agree better together than this spoiled child of fortune and I,

—miserable man. His children will share my treasures and wear my crown soon enough. I will at least be king for the present.”

Like a flash there came over him the thought of his proud, omnipotent greatness, and aroused from his reverie to new life, he threw his golden cup, in sudden fury, into the middle of the room, so that the wine spirted over the guests, and cried,—

“Enough of this idle chattering and senseless noise; drunk as we are, let us hold a council and consider what answer we shall give to the Massagetæ.”

There followed a confused scene of bickering and debating, the majority first inclining one way, as Hystaspes, the father of Darius, advocated war, and then the other when Cræsus showed the advisability of preserving peace. Cambyses listened calmly to all this, and then rising, he exclaimed, in a voice of thunder,—

“Be silent, and hear your king!”

Amid the quiet that followed this command, the king continued, in a lower tone, “The question is not of the expediency of war or peace; it is whether the soul of my father has been sufficiently avenged.”

A low, approving murmur answered the king, whose second question, “Shall we accept the proposals of their embassy, and give peace to this decimated and afflicted people?” was also answered affirmatively.

“That is what I wished to know,” continued Cambyses. “To-morrow we will, according to the ancient custom, reconsider when sober what we have decided when drunk. Carouse away all night; I leave you, and at the last cry of the holy bird Parodar I expect you to be at the gate of Bel to start for the hunt.”

With these words the monarch left the hall. A thundering shout of “Victory to the king!” sounded after him.

Boges, who had slipped out of the room before his master, found a servant of the gardener of the hanging-gardens standing in the vestibule.

“What do you want here?” the eunuch asked.

“I have something for Prince Bartia.”

“For Bartia? Has he asked your master for seeds or cuttings?”

The boy shook his sunburnt head and smiled, roguishly.

"Then some one else has sent you?"

"Yes, a woman."

"Oh, the Egyptian has sent you to tell something to her brother-in-law?"

"Who told you so?"

"Nitētis spoke to me about it. Give me what you have there and I will take it to Bartia."

"But I must not give it to any one but himself."

"Give it to me, I say; I can perform the commission better than you?"

"No, I will not."

"Obey me, or——"

At this moment the king approached. Bogen reflected for a second, and then cried out with a loud voice to the whip-bearers, who were on guard at the gate, and ordered them to take the astonished boy into custody.

"What is the matter here?" asked the king.

"This audacious fellow," answered the eunuch, "has forced his way into the palace to give Bartia a message from your wife, Nitētis."

The boy, when he saw the king, had dropped upon his knees, touching the ground with his forehead. Cambyses, deadly pale, looked down at the messenger; then, turning to the eunuch, he asked,—

"What does the Egyptian want of my brother?"

"The boy asserts that he has orders to give what he has with him only to Bartia himself."

At these words the youth, weeping bitterly, handed a papyrus-roll to the king. Cambyses snatched it from him and stamped furiously with his foot when he saw the Greek letters, which he could not read. After he had collected himself, he asked the boy, sternly,—

"Who gave you this?"

"Mandane, the maid of the Egyptian lady."

"For my brother Bartia?"

"She told me to hand this to the handsome prince, to greet him from the lady Nitētis, and to tell him——" The king's wrath so frightened the poor wretch that he could scarcely continue. "The prince was with you before the feast, so that I could not speak to him; and I am

waiting for him now, as Mandane promised me a gold piece if I did the business cleverly."

"Which you have not!" thundered the king, deceived and outraged as he thought himself. "Which you have not! Here, seize the fellow!"

The boy prayed for forgiveness, but to no purpose, for as quick as thought the flagellators laid hold on him; and the king, who hastened with swift strides to his own apartments, paid no more attention to his supplicating cries. To Boges, who had gone with him, Cambyses said,—

"From this hour I intrust the superintendence of the hanging-gardens to you. Look well to the Egyptian; if any person or message reaches her without my knowledge, your life will pay the penalty."

"But if Cassandane or Atossa send?"

"Send off the messengers, and tell them to say that every such attempt I shall regard as an insult."

"May I ask you for a favor, O king?"

"The time is badly chosen."

"I feel ill; intrust the keeping watch in the garden to some one else for to-morrow."

"No; leave me."

"I am suffering from a fever; I have lost all consciousness three times to-day. If any one should enter during such an attack——"

"Who can take your place?"

"The Lydian captain of the eunuchs, Candaules; he is as true as gold and inflexibly stern. One day of recreation will restore my health. Be gracious."

"No one is served as indifferently as a king. Candaules may take your place to-morrow; but give him strict orders,—and tell him the smallest negligence will be at the risk of his life. Leave me now."

"One more thing, your Majesty. You know that to-morrow night, in the hanging-gardens, the rare, blue lily blooms. Hystaspes, Intaphernes, Gobryas, Cræsus, and Oropastes, the greatest horticulturists of your court, have expressed a desire to see it. Can they enter for a few minutes? Candaules will take care that they do not speak with the Egyptian."

"Candaules will keep his eyes open, if he values his life. Go."

Boges bowed low and left the room. To the slaves, who went before with torches, he threw gold pieces. He was joyful enough; all his plans were succeeding beyond expectation, for the fate of Nitetis seemed to be settled, and he held in his hands the life of the rival, whom he hated.

Cambyses walked his room till morning. By cock-crow he had fully determined, first, to force Nitetis to confess, and then to send her into the harem as a slave for the concubines. Bartia, the destroyer of his happiness, should go at once to Egypt, and later, should rule, as satrap, some distant province. He dreaded the crime of a brother's murder; but he knew himself well enough to fear that he might in a moment of wrath kill one who was so hateful to him if Bartia were not well out of the reach of his passion.

Two hours after sunrise, Cambyses started for the chase in the great park of Babylon, accompanied by an immense crowd of followers and more than a thousand dogs.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE RISING OF THE STAR OF TISTAR.

THE chase was over: whole wagons full of slaughtered beasts, among which were several monstrous boars, killed by the king's own hand, were brought back by the returning huntsmen. In front of the palace-gates they dispersed to change the old Persian hunting-costume of plain leather for the splendid court-dress of the Medes.

During the hunt the king had given Bartia, with painfully repressed emotion, the apparently friendly order to depart for Egypt the next day, to bring back Sappho to Persia. He had at the same time bestowed upon him

the revenues of Bactra, Rhagæ, and Sinope, for his new establishment, and upon the young wife as girdle-money the taxes of her ancestral city, Phoea. Bartia thanked his generous brother with unfeigned warmth. Cambyses' manner was cold and constrained, and bidding him a curt good-by, he turned to pursue a wild ass.

On the way home the prince invited his friends, Cræsus, Darius, Zopyrus, and Gyges, to a farewell feast. Cræsus said he would join them later, for he wanted to see the blue lily at the rising of the star of Tistar. When early in the morning the old king went to pay Nitetis a visit at the hanging-gardens he had been refused admittance, and now the blue lily might give him another chance to see the pupil whom he so loved, whose behavior of yesterday he found such difficulty in explaining to himself, and whose strict surveillance gave him great anxiety.

The young Achæmenides sat, towards twilight, talking together in a shady arbor in the royal garden, around which flowed noisy, sparkling little streams. Araspes, a distinguished Persian and a friend of the late king, joined them, and took kindly to the excellent wines of the young prince. They all congratulated Bartia on his happiness, and told Araspes that it was not too late to follow so good an example; the latter, however, only shook his head, and would give no answer to their questions as to why he had never married. Zopyrus, who rejoiced in the possession of five wives and countless concubines, gave for Araspes' benefit a critical account of the advantages and drawbacks of his own condition. When he had finished, Araspes said,—

“If your wives could only hear you.”

“Of course, they would make war upon me, or, what were worse, would make peace among themselves.”

“What do you mean?”

“What do I mean? It is very plain that you have had no experience.”

“Then initiate us into your mysteries.”

“With all the pleasure in life. You can imagine that five wives in one house do not live as peaceably as doves in a cot,—mine at least keep up an uninterrupted war to the knife. I am used to it, and I like to see their

vivacity. A year ago they agreed for one day, and that was the most miserable of my life."

"You are laughing at us."

"No, I am as grave as a judge. The wretch of a eunuch who takes charge of the five had admitted an old jewel-peddler from Tyrus. Each of them chose an expensive ornament. When I got home, Sudabe came to me for the money. The things were so dear that I refused point-blank. All five of them, separately, besought me for it, but saying no, absolutely, I left the house and went to the court. When I came back there was my whole family sitting howling together. One was embracing the other, and calling her 'companion in suffering and sorrow.' The injured innocents rose with touching unanimity and hurled abuse and threats at me, till I had to leave the room. When I wanted to go to bed I found five closed doors. The next day the lamentations of the previous night were renewed. I fled again, and went with the king to the chase. When I returned, tired, hungry, and frozen, for it was spring when we were at Ecbatana and the snow was yards deep on the Orontes, I found no fire on the hearth, and no meal prepared. This high-minded set had, to punish me, entered into an alliance, had put out the fire, had forbidden the cooks to do their duty, and, worst of all, had kept the ornaments. I had scarcely ordered the slaves to make a fire and to get me something to eat when the impudent jewelry-seller appeared again and demanded his money. I refuse a second time to pay, passed another solitary night, and, finally, to finish the woeful narrative, I offered him the next morning, for the sake of peace, ten talents. And from that time I fear their unanimity worse than the evil Dives, and I like nothing better than their little mutual unpleasantnesses."

"Poor Zopyrus!" said Bartia, laughing.

"Poor?" said the fivefold spouse. "Why, I am a great deal happier than you. My wives are young and pretty, and when they get old there is nothing to prevent my taking handsomer ones into my house, who will appear doubly charming in contrast with their faded predecessors. Here, slave, some lamps! The sun has gone down, and one cannot taste the wine in the dark."

"Listen! Do you hear how beautifully the bulbul is singing?" exclaimed Darius, who had walked out into the open air.

"By Mithra, son of Hystaspes, you must be in love," cried Araspes. "A man who will leave wine to listen to the nightingale has as surely been struck by the arrow of love as my name is Araspes."

"You are right," said Bartia. "And, Darius, whom were you thinking of when you went out to hear the bird?"

"Of no one," he answered. "You know how much I like to watch the stars,—the Tistar was shining out so wonderfully that I left my wine to look at it. I should have had to shut my ears not to hear the nightingale."

"Oh, you opened them wide enough; your enraptured exclamation proved that," said Araspes.

"Enough!" said Darius, whom this banter was beginning to annoy; "I will have no allusion made to things about which I never wish to hear."

"You foolish boy," whispered the old man, "now you have betrayed yourself. If you were not in love you would laugh instead of blazing out in this way; but I will not tease you; and instead, let me ask you what you read in the stars?"

Darius at these words looked towards the sky; and just hovering on the horizon was a constellation that at once seized his attention. Zopyrus, who was watching the astrologer, exclaimed to his friends,—

"Something serious must be going on up there! Come, Darius, tell us what is taking place in the heavens?"

"Nothing good," answered he. "I must speak with you alone, Bartia."

"Why is that necessary? Araspes is reticent, and I have no secret from the others."

"Yet——"

"Why not speak?"

"No; come with me into the garden."

Bartia, making a gesture of farewell to his guests, went with Darius into the clear moonlight. When they were alone, the son of Hystaspes began, excitedly,—

"To-day, for the third time, the skies bode you no good. Your evil star approaches so near your House of Fortune that it needs very little knowledge of the art to see that some dreadful danger threatens you. Look to yourself, Bartia, and set off at once for Egypt; the stars tell me that it is on the Euphrates that the danger threatens, and not at a distance."

"Do you believe firmly in the foretelling powers of the skies?"

"Most firmly: the stars never lie."

"Then it would be folly to attempt to avoid what they threaten."

"True, a man cannot escape his destiny; but fate is like the teachers of fencing, who think the most of those pupils who can fight the longest and the bravest with them. Go to-night to Egypt."

"I cannot; for I have not yet said farewell to my mother and Atossa."

"Send them your farewell by a messenger, and intrust to Cræsus the duty of explaining it all to them."

"They will think me a coward."

"To fly from a man *is* cowardly; but from fate, it is wise."

"You contradict yourself, Darius. What would the fencing-master say of a runaway scholar?"

"He would be pleased at his sagacity, in avoiding overwhelming odds."

"Which must sooner or later be too much for him. How can I possibly put aside unchangeable events? I would not take a tooth out before it ached; so, in this case, I will await the danger firmly, and pray for its quick arrival, that I may leave it behind me."

"You do not know its magnitude."

"Do you fear for my life?"

"No!"

"Tell me, then, what is it you anticipate?"

"That Egyptian priest, at Sais, with whom I used to study the stars, helped me to cast your horoscope. He was the most wonderful astrologer I have ever seen. I owe much of my knowledge to him, and I will not con-

ceal from you that he made known to me the dangers that hang over your head "

" You never told me !"

" Why should I trouble you before the time ? Now that your fate approaches, I warn you."

" I thank you, and I will be prudent. A little while ago I would not have listened to your warning ; but now that I love I feel as though my life were no longer at my own disposal."

" I understand your feeling."

" You understand ? Then Araspes was right,—you don't deny it ?"

" It is but a hopeless dream."

" What woman could disdain you ?"

" Disdain ? I do not understand you."

" Does the courage of the boldest hunter, the strongest wrestler, the wisest of all young Persians, quail before a woman ?"

" Can I confide something to you that I would not trust to my father, Bartia ?"

" Oh, yes ; trust me all in all."

" I love the daughter of Cyrus, thine and thy brother's sister."

" Do I hear aright ? You love Atossa ? Thanks to the immortal gods ! From this day I no longer believe in these stars of yours, O Darius, for they do not give me the dangers they fright me with, but joy and bliss unlooked for. Tell me the story of your love, my brother, that I may make sure truth of that which you call a hopeless dream."

" Before our departure for Egypt," began the young Darius, " we set out, with the whole court, from Ecbatana to Susa. I commanded the company of the ' Immortals,' who were to guard the carriages of the royal women. In the defile which leads over the Orontes, the horses of the carriage, in which were your mother and sister, stumbled, the yoke broke from the pole, and, before my very eyes, the heavy four-wheeled wagon plunged headlong into the depth below. Plying our spurs, we came up only to see the vehicle disappear ; but, instead of finding the horror we looked for, we saw that the gods had taken

your loved ones into their almighty protection, and there, among the branches of two gigantic cypresses, which clung with their tough roots to the fissured slate-rock, hung the wagon. Quick as thought I sprang from my horse, and, without waiting to consider, clambered down one of the trees. Your mother and sister were calling for help and holding out their arms imploringly. Their peril was still terrible; for the wooden sides of the carriage had been split from their joints by the fall, and every minute threatened to give way and plunge the women down into the abyss which, deep, black, and bottomless,—a very haunt of the evil Dives,—seemed waiting for its victims. In a moment I stood, holding on to the cypress trunk, in front of the shattered wagon. It was then that for the first time the weeping eyes of your sister fell upon me. From that moment I loved Atossa. In nervous haste I lifted the trembling women from the wagon, which a second later went to pieces and fell in a hundred fragments far below. I am a strong man, but it needed all my strength to uphold these women and myself till a rope could be lowered to us. Atossa hung on my neck; Cassandane, supported by my left arm, rested on my breast. With my right hand I fastened the rope around my body, and in a few minutes we were safe on the highway. After a Magus had bound up the wounds that the sharp rope had made in my side, the king sent for me, gave me this chain, and with it the revenues of a whole satrapy. Then he took me himself to the royal ladies, and thanked me most heartily in words of truest kindness. Cassandane allowed me to kiss her forehead, and gave me, as a bridal present for my future wife, the jewels she herself had worn at the time of the accident. Atossa took a ring from her finger and put it on mine, which she kissed as she did so. Since that day, the happiest of my life, I never saw your sister again till last night. At the birthday feast we sat opposite each other. I saw nothing but Atossa, and I know she has not forgotten her knight. Cassandane——”

“Oh, my mother will gladly receive you as her son-in-law; I will vouch for that. Let your father go to the

king. He is our uncle, and has a perfect right to ask for the daughter of Cyrus for his son."

"But do not you remember that dream of your father's, on account of which Cambyses never ceases to regard me with distrust?"

"Oh, that was forgotten long ago. You mean the one in which he thought he saw you with wings on your shoulders, and which, deceived by the interpreters, he feared was a warning that you, a boy of eighteen, would aspire to the throne. Cambyses took the same view of it until Cræsus suggested, after that gallant rescue of yours, that the dream was now fulfilled; for nothing but an eagle could have had the strength and skill to hang over that abyss as you did."

"I remember that this explanation only measurably satisfied the king. He would be the only eagle in Persia. Still, Cræsus does not spare his vanity. I wonder where the old Lydian can be all this time?"

"He is in the hanging-gardens. Your father and Gobryas will bring him back to you."

"Now, this is what I call the perfection of politeness," they heard a voice say, which sounded like that of Zopyrus. "Bartia invites us to a supper, and then leaves us without a host, while he goes away to talk secrets with Darius!"

"We are coming, we are coming," was the answer to this mild admonition, and then Bartia added hurriedly to his cousin, "Your love for Atossa makes me most happy; I will stay till to-morrow if all the stars of heaven conspire against me. I will sound her heart, and if all is as it should be, then I will away, and leave my winged Darius to fly to the goal on his own pinions."

With these words Bartia went back to the arbor, while his friend waited to look a second time at the heavens. The longer he looked the darker grew his brow, and when at last the Tistar star set, he murmured, "Poor Bartia!"

As he turned to go back at his friend's call, he caught sight of a new constellation that riveted all his attention. The sad expression of his face turned, as he gazed, to a triumphant smile; his tall figure seemed to grow loftier,

as with his hand pressed to his heart, and on his lips the exulting words, "Winged Darius, spread thy pinions: thy star is rising," he hastened back to his companions.

In a few moments Cræsus appeared; the young men rose from their seats to bid him welcome, when, as though thunder-struck, he suddenly stood still, as he recognized, in the moonlight, Bartia's familiar face.

"What, my father, what has happened to you?" exclaimed Gyges.

"Nothing, nothing," he stammered, scarcely audibly; and pushing his son aside he went up to the prince and whispered in his ear, "Wretched boy! are you still here? Delay not, go at once; the whip-bearers, who are to arrest you, are following at my heels. If you do not make all haste you will expiate your twofold folly with your life."

"But, Cræsus, I have——"

"You have made sport of the law of the land, and, if we can believe what we see, you have outraged your brother's honor."

"You say that——"

"Fly, fly, I tell you! If even it was with the purest intentions that you went to the hanging-gardens, you still have everything to fear. How could you, who know the fury of Cambyses' temper, dare to violate his express command?"

"I do not understand you."

"Do not attempt to excuse yourself. Do you not know that Cambyses has long been jealous of you? that your nocturnal visit to the Egyptian——"

"Cræsus, I have never, since Nitetis has been here, set my foot within the hanging-gardens."

"Do not add lying to your other iniquities."

"I swear to you!"

"Will you make an act of folly a crime, by perjury? The guards are coming. Fly, fly!"

"I stay, for I rest upon my oath."

"Infatuated fool! Know then that I myself, Hystaspes, and the other Achæmenides, saw you, an hour ago, in the hanging-gardens."

Bartia, who had let the old man go on, turned to his friends, when he heard this last assertion, and said,—

"Crœsus protests that he met me, an hour ago, in the hanging-gardens; but I have never, as you know, left you a moment since sunset. Give your testimony that some evil Dive has been playing a trick upon our friend and his companions."

"I swear to you, father, that Bartia, for several hours, has not been outside this garden."

"We say the same!" exclaimed Araspes, Zopyrus, and Darius.

"You are trying to deceive me," answered Crœsus, angrily, looking reproachfully at each of them. "Do you suppose I have lost my sight and senses? What do you think your testimony is worth as opposed to that of the oldest nobles of the court, Hystaspes, Gobryas, Intaphernes, and the high-priest Oropastes? Bartia, for all your perjury, is numbered with the dead, if he does not flee at once."

"May Angramainius destroy me," broke in the old Araspes, "if the son of Cyrus has been near the hanging-gardens in these last two hours."

"If our testimony is false," added Gyges, "never again call me son."

"By the everlasting stars," began Darius, when Bartia, interrupting the eager disputants, said, in a calm voice,—

"Yonder comes a company of the body-guard into the garden; now I shall be arrested; nor would I flee if I could, for, innocent as I am, I will not, by flight, incur the suspicion of guilt. By the soul of my father, by the blind eyes of my mother, by the pure light of the sun, I swear to you, Crœsus, that I am not lying."

"I am, then, to believe you against the evidence of my own eyes? I will do it, boy, for I love you. Whether you be guilty or innocent I know not, I will not know; but this I do know, that you must fly at once and with all speed, for you know Cambyzes. My carriage is at the door,—drive the horses till they drop dead, but fly. The soldiers seem to know what is the matter, for they are lingering to give their favorite time to escape. Flee, flee, or it is all over with you!"

"Flee, Bartia," urged Darius. "Remember the stars have given you warning."

Bartia only shook his head, and said, as he turned to his terrified friends, "I have never fled from danger, and will not to-day. To me cowardice is worse than death, and I would rather others should wrong me than that I should wrong myself. Ah! here are the soldiers. Welcome, Bischen,—you are here to arrest me? Yes? Wait but one moment, while I say farewell to my friends."

Bischen, one of the old captains of Cyrus, who had given Bartia his first lessons in the use of the spear and the arrow, who had fought by his side in the Tapurian war, and who loved him as his own son, here interrupted him, "You need not say farewell to your friends, for the king, who is raging like a madman, has commanded that I should arrest you and all who were with you." Then he added, in a whisper, "The king is beside himself with fury, and threatens your life. You may fly; my men obey me blindly and will not pursue; and I am old, and Persia will not lose much if my head is taken off for disobedience."

"Thanks, old friend," answered Bartia, extending his hand. "But I cannot accept this sacrifice, for I am guiltless; and if Cambyses is fierce-tempered, still he is just. Come, good friends, I think the king will hear us to-night."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CONDEMNATION.

Two hours later Bartia, with his companions, stood before the king. Pale and with hollow eyes the stately man sat in his golden chair, behind which were two physicians with all sorts of instruments and vessels in their hands. Cambyses a moment before had come to himself, after lying for more than an hour in a fit of what we call epilepsy. Since the coming of Nitetis he had been free from these attacks which his overwrought excitement had brought on to-day. Had he met Bartia

a little sooner, he would have killed the prince with his own hand.

His illness, though it had not quenched his rage, had at least so far calmed it that he was in a condition to hear the accusers and the accused. On the right of the throne stood all those who had been in the hanging-gardens, and behind them Boges; on the left were Bartia and his late guests. In the background were several hundred dignitaries and nobles.

After a long silence, Cambyses, bending his eyes upon the handcuffed youth as though he would blast him by a look, said, with a hollow voice,—

“High-priest, tell us what awaits him who deceives his brother, dishonors and outrages his sovereign, and casts darkness upon his king’s heart with hellish lies?”

Oropastes came forward and answered, “There awaits such an one, when he is discovered, a death of torture in this world, and a fearful judgment on the bridge Chuiwat; for such an one has sinned against the holiest ordinances: and in committing three crimes has forfeited the grace of our law, which commands that *his* life shall not be taken away, even if he be a slave, who has sinned but once.”

“Then is Bartia guilty to the death. Take him away and strangle him. Take him away, I say! Silence, wretch! I will never again hear your false, lying voice: never again see those eyes that deceive all with the treacherous looks that hell has taught them. Away with him!”

Bischen, the captain, approached to execute the command, but Crœsus at that moment came forward, and, throwing himself upon the ground, with his forehead touching the pavement, said,—

“Let every year, every day, bring you good fortune; let Auramazda pour upon you all the pleasures of life; and let the Amescha-çpenta be the guardians of your throne! Do not close your ears to the counsel of the old. Remember that Cyrus, your father, made me your adviser. You would destroy your brother; but I say unto you, obey not anger, but strive to conquer it. To prove before he acts is the duty of the wise man and of the

king. Shed not your brother's blood, for know that the smoke of it will rise to heaven, and, as a thick cloud, make dark the murderer's days, till at length the thunder-bolt of vengeance shall fall from it. Yet I know you will judge, and not kill. Deal, therefore, like to those who administer justice, and hear both sides before you condemn."

Cambyses listened in silence; and beckoning to Bischen to come back, commanded Boges to repeat his accusation. The eunuch bowed down and began,—

"I was ill, and therefore had to give the surveillance over the Egyptian to my comrade Candaules, who has expiated his negligence by his death. Towards evening I was better, and ascended the hanging-gardens to see whether everything was in order, and to look at the rare flower, which was to bloom on that night. The king—may Auramazda give him victory!—had commanded that the Egyptian should be more strictly watched than usual, because she had attempted to send Prince Bartia a letter——"

"Peace!" broke in the king. "Keep to your subject."

"When the Tistar star was just rising I reached the gardens, and I then stayed some time with these noble Achæmenides, the high-priest, and King Cræsus, examining the blue lily, which was indeed of wonderful beauty. I called Candaules and asked him, in the presence of these noble witnesses, if all was right. He answered 'yes,' and added, that he had just come from Nitetis, who had wept all the day, and who had tasted no food or drink. Then I, being anxious for the health of my illustrious mistress, ordered Candaules to fetch a physician, and was about to ascertain for myself her condition, when I saw in the moonlight a man's figure. I was so weak and ill that I could scarcely stand; and I had no one to assist me except the gardener. My servants were some distance off, keeping watch at the entrance. I clapped my hands to summon some of them, and then, as they did not come, I went, guarded by these noble gentlemen, towards the house. The man stood in front of the window of the Egyptian, and gave a low whistle when he saw us coming. Immediately there appeared in

the clear moonlight a second figure, scarcely to be recognized, which leaped from the room of Nitetis into the garden, and came towards us with his companion. I thought my eyes were deceiving me when I recognized in the intruder Prince Bartia. A fig-tree concealed us from the fugitives, but we could easily observe them as they passed, scarcely four steps in front of us. While I was considering whether I should be right in arresting a son of Cyrus, and as Cræsus was calling out 'Bartia,' the two suddenly disappeared behind a cypress-tree. We followed them, and searched a long time in vain for the two who had so strangely escaped. No one but your brother can explain this mystery. The Egyptian lay in a swoon in her bed-chamber when we went to search the house."

All present listened in anxious expectation. Cambyses gnashed his teeth, as he asked, "Can you confirm the words of the eunuch, Hystaspes?"

"Yes."

"Why did you not seize the villain?"

"We are soldiers, not executioners."

"Or, rather, any villain is dearer to you than your king."

"We honor you and abhor the criminal Bartia as we once loved the son of Cyrus."

"Did you clearly recognize Bartia?"

"Yes."

"And you, Cræsus, do you answer 'no' to my question?"

"I do not, for I saw, as I believe, your brother in the moonlight as plainly as I see him now; still, I think some strange resemblance has deceived us."

At these words Boges turned pale. Cambyses, however, shook his head distrustfully. "Whom can I ever believe, if the eyes of my most trusted vassals can be deceived? Who would attempt to give judgment if testimony such as yours is to have no weight?"

"Other testimony, as good as ours, will show that we are mistaken."

"Who dares to give evidence for this villain?" cried the king, springing up and stamping with his foot.

"We!" "I!" "We!" cried Araspes, Darius, Gyges, and Zopyrus with one voice.

"Traitors! knaves!" screamed the king; but when the warning looks of Cræsus met his eye, he lowered his voice and said, "What have you to say for this wretch? Think before you speak, and remember the punishment that awaits false witness."

"We need no warning," said Araspes; "yet we can swear, by Mithra, that, since we came home from the hunt, Bartia has never left his garden for a moment."

"And," added Darius, "I, the son of Hystaspes, can clearly prove your brother's innocence, for I watched, with him, the rising of the Tistar star, which, according to Boges, lighted his flight."

Hystaspes, at these words, bent upon his son a look of astonishment and doubt. Cambyses turned from one set of witnesses to the other: the one firm in the belief of the truth of their own testimony; the other wishing to trust that testimony, yet unable to do so.

Bartia, who up to this time had been gazing silently and sadly upon his fettered hands, said, as he bowed low,—

"Will you permit me to speak a few words, my king?"

"Speak."

"Our father gave us the example of seeking only what is pure and good; therefore, hitherto, my life has been blameless. If you can point to one single deed of darkness that I have done, then believe me not; but if you can find no fault in me, then trust my words that a son of Cyrus will die rather than lie. The best men of your kingdom testify against the best, friend against friend, father against son; but I tell you that if the whole of Persia were to lift up its hand against you, and if all were to swear that Cambyses has done this or this, and you were to say 'I did not do so,' I, Bartia, in the teeth of every Persian, would cry out, 'You are false witnesses, for sooner will the sea cast up fire than the mouth of a son of Cyrus utter lies.' We two are so nobly born that only you against me can testify, and I against you."

Cambyses looked with less of anger at his brother as the latter continued: "And here I swear, by Mithra

and all the holy spirits, that I am innocent. If, since my return from the hunt, I have been in the hanging-gardens, if I am now lying to you, then may my life be forfeit, and my race be blotted out forever!"

Bartia had made this oath in such an assured, convincing tone, that Cambyses commanded his chains to be taken off. And he added, curtly, "I will believe you, that I may not think you the most abandoned of men. To-morrow we will consult the astrologers, the prophets, and the priests. Perhaps they may discover the truth. Do you see any light in this darkness, Oropastes?"

"Your servant believes that a Dive took the form of Bartia to ruin your brother, and to defile thy royal soul with the blood of your father's son."

Cambyses and all present nodded approvingly, and the king was about to offer his brother his hand, when a chamberlain entered and handed him a dagger which a eunuch had found under the window of Nitetis. Cambyses looked carefully at the weapon, whose costly handle glittered with rubies and turquoises, turned pale, and threw the dagger down at his brother's feet so violently that the stones flew out of their setting.

"It is your dagger, miserable wretch!" he exclaimed, in a fresh access of fury. "It was with this that you gave the death-blow to the wild boar that I struck down. And you must recognize it too, Cræsus, for my father took it from your treasure-chamber at Sardis. You are convicted, liar and deceiver! The Dives never use weapons; a knife like this is not to be picked up everywhere. You are feeling at your belt! You turn pale! Your knife is gone!"

"It is gone. I must have lost it, and an enemy——"

"Bind him, fetter him, Bischen! Away with traitor and false witnesses! To-morrow they shall be strangled. Death is the punishment for perjury. If they escape, their guards shall take their place. Not a word will I hear. Away with the perjured villains! Hasten to the hanging-gardens, Boges, and bring the Egyptian to me. No! I will not see her again. It is growing gray; at noon she shall be whipped through the city. Then I will——"

The king fell in another fit upon the marble floor of the chamber.

During this terrible scene Cassandane, led by Megabyzus, entered the room. The tidings of what had happened had reached her apartments, and she had risen, even at this late hour, to ascertain the truth, and to keep her son from any rash and hasty step. Believing firmly and undoubtingly in the innocence of Bartia and Nitetis, even though she could not explain what had happened, she tried several times to communicate with the Egyptian princess, but had not succeeded, the guards at the garden having refused to her messengers entrance.

Cræsus hurried to meet her, and break to her the events of the night. He confirmed her in her belief in the innocence of those who were accused, and then took her to the couch of her son. The fit had not lasted long this time. Pale and exhausted, he lay on his golden bed under coverings of purple. Next him sat his mother; at the foot of the couch stood Cræsus and Oropastes; and in the farther part of the room were four physicians, consulting together in low whispers concerning the condition of their patient. Cassandane advised her son, in gentle words, to refrain from bursts of passion, and to remember what effect they had on his health.

"You are right, mother," answered the king, with a bitter smile. "I must put out of my sight all that may awaken memory. The Egyptian must die, and my traitor brother shall follow his paramour."

Cassandane used all her eloquence to prove the innocence of the condemned and to soften the king's wrath; but neither prayers, nor tears, nor words of maternal counsel could move Cambyses from his determination to rid himself of the destroyers of his peace and happiness. At last he exclaimed, impatiently,—

"I am exhausted, and cannot listen any longer to your sobs and lamentations. The guilt of Nitetis is plain. A man left her room at night; and this man was no thief, but the handsomest of the Persians,—she sent a letter to him last evening."

"Do you know the contents of that letter?" asked Cræsus, approaching the bed.

"No, it was written in Greek. The deceitful woman chose for her wicked purpose a language that no one at this court can read."

"Will you allow me to translate the letter for you?"

Cambyses pointed to a casket of ivory, in which the writing lay, and said, "Take and read it; but do not omit a word, for I will have it read again by some of the merchants from Sinope who live at Babylon."

Cræsus breathed with new hope, and took up the paper; but when he had glanced over it, his eyes filled with tears, and his lips murmured, "The story of Pandora is true, and all that the poets say. They are all, all faithless. Oh, Cassandane, how the gods deceive us! only when life is at its very end, showing us the tinsel that we thought was gold, and the poison which we were tasting as pleasant food."

Cassandane wept aloud, and tore her rich robes. Cambyses only clinched his fists, as Cræsus read:—

"Nitetis, daughter of Amasis of Egypt, to Bartia, son of the great Cyrus: I have something of importance to tell to you,—you alone. To-morrow I hope to be able perhaps to speak with you at your mother's house. It is in your power to comfort a sorrowful, loving heart, and to give it, before it breaks, one moment of happiness. I have much that is sad to tell you; and I say again, I must see you soon."

The wild laugh of despair that Cambyses gave went to his mother's heart; but he repelled her caresses, as she bent over to kiss his forehead, saying, "It is a dubious honor to be one of your favorites. Bartia did not have to be sent for twice, and has, besides, dishonored himself by perjury. His friends are covered with inextinguishable shame, and your 'dearest daughter' is by him—— But no! Bartia has no share in the ruin of this monster, disguised in the beauty of a Peri. Her whole life has been full of hypocrisy, lies, and deceit, and her death shall convince you that I know how to punish. Now leave me, for I must be alone."

Scarcely had they departed when Cambyses sprang from his bed, and walked the room, like a madman, till the holy bird Parodar awoke the morn. When the sun had

risen, he threw himself upon the couch and sank into a deathlike sleep.

During all this the young captives and old Araspes sat carousing together, Bartia having first dictated to Gyges a letter for Sappho.

"Let us be merry," exclaimed Zopyrus; "for there is little enough of that sort of thing left for us."

"You are right," said Araspes; "let us make the most of our time."

"Those who go guiltless to their graves have no cause for sadness," added Gyges. "Here, slave, fill me a cup."

"Come, Bartia and Darius," cried Zopyrus to his two friends, who were talking together in a low tone, "will you never have done with your secrets? Why not join in our mirth? By Mithra, I never had much fancy for dying; but to-day I welcome Azis, for he will take us all away together; and Zopyrus would rather die with his friends than live without them."

"The first thing we must try to do," said Darius, as he, with Bartia, joined the others, "is to clear up this mystery."

"It is all one to me," rejoined Zopyrus, "whether I die with an explanation or without one, as long as I know that I am innocent, and have not deserved a perjurer's death. Bring us golden cups, Bischen; these miserable brass things give the wine a taste. I suppose Cambyses won't forbid *that*."

"It is not the base metal, but the bitterness of death that spoils the wine," said Bartia.

"By my body, not so!" cried Zopyrus. "I had half forgotten already that strangling kills a man!" With these words he nudged Gyges, and whispered to him, "Be merry, can't you? Don't you see poor Bartia finds parting from life and love almost more than he can bear. What were you saying, Darius?"

"Only that I thought that the conjecture of Oropastes, that an evil Dive had taken Bartia's shape and gone to the Egyptian's house to destroy us, might be true after all."

"Nonsense! I don't believe such things."

"Don't you remember the story about King Cavus, to whom a Dive came in the form of a beautiful minstrel?"

"Indeed I do," answered Araspes. "Cyrus used to have it sung so often at the banquet that I know it by heart. Would you like to hear it?"

"By all means, by all means!" exclaimed the others.

Araspes, pausing a moment to recall the words, began, in a sort of recitative,—

"Now in his father's place Cavus was king,
And all the world did its allegiance bring;
The powers of earth before him bowed in awe,
And countless treasures at his feet he saw;
The throne itself, rich carcanets of pearls,
The crown of gold on his own golden curls,
And steeds of Thasir strong in flank and limb.
In such possessions, who could vie with him?
Thus thought the king, who, seated 'neath the rose,
Drank the sweet wine in indolent repose.

"One morning to his famous court there came
A fair young minstrel of an unknown name.
The evil Dive, for such he was, began:
'A singer am I, of Masenderan;
Go ask the Shah if he will let thee bring
The stranger to his throne and hear him sing;'—
And Cavus said, 'Let him before us stand
And join the singers of our peerless land;'—
Then o'er the strings the Dive his fingers ran,
And sang the song of fair Masenderan."

"Would you like to hear the song of Masenderan?"

"Yes; sing it all."

"I sing the land unseen by eye of man,
The happy plains of fair Masenderan,
Where blooms the rose throughout the joyous year,
And on the crag the flower to young winds dear;
Bright tulips, too. Here ever soft and low
In an eternal spring the breezes blow;
In its green woods the nightingale's sweet song
With evening cometh; and the timid throng
Of wild deer haste in never-resting flight
Through forests dark, and through the golden light.
All glorious colors, odors sweeter far
Than those of Araby, here unfading are;
The water of roses pours in ceaseless streams,
And perfumes strange steal o'er the sense like dreams.
In Bahman, Ader, Fervedin, and Di,*

* May, March, July, and April.

The tulip flaunts its gay emblazonry,
 The flowers droop not in this air serene,
 Along the streamlet's edge the grass is green;
 The falcons fly unwearied in the chase,
 And all is filled with beauty and rare grace.
 A golden mitre wears the holy seer;
 And belts of gold each paladin and peer.
 My own fair land—yon poor, blind fool who dies
 And sees not thee, foregoes life's lordliest prize."

"And Kai Kavus listened to the words of the Dive, followed him to Masenderan, and was there overcome by the Dives and robbed of his eyes."

"But," added Darius, "Rustem, the great hero, came, and conquered the 'Erscheng,' and the other Dives freed their captives, and restored the blind to sight, by dropping into their eyes the blood of the slaughtered demons. So will it be with us, friends; we, the captives, shall be set free, and the eyes of Cambyses and of our deluded fathers will be opened, that they shall know our innocence. Listen, Bischen, if we are put to death, go thou to the Magi and the Chaldeans, and the Egyptian Nebenchari, and bid them never again look up to the stars, for they have proved themselves cheats and liars to Darius."

"I have always maintained," broke in Araspes, "that only dreams could foretell the future. Before Abradat fell in the fight at Sardis, the incomparable Panthea saw him in a vision pierced through with a Lydian arrow."

"You inconsiderate fellow," exclaimed Zopyrus, "what makes you remind us of a death on the battle-field, when we are going to be throttled to-morrow?"

"You are right," rejoined the old man, "I have seen many a death more to be desired than ours,—ay, even more than the happiest life. There was a time, my children, when it was better with the world than it is now."

"Tell us of those days, Araspes. Tell us why you never married; it will do you no harm if we should gossip about it in the next world."

"I have no secret, for any of your fathers can tell you the story. When I was young, though I coquetted with women, I laughed at love; but it happened that Panthea, the fairest of all women, fell into our hands. Cyrus,

as I boasted an unassailable heart, made me her keeper. I saw her every day, and was taught the lesson that love is stronger than man's will. She refused my offers, and persuaded Cyrus to remove me from my post and to take her husband, Abradat, as his ally. The noble, faithful woman adorned her husband, when he went to the battle, with all her jewels, and told him that he could only repay Cyrus, who had treated her when captive like a sister, by self-sacrificing devotion and heroic bravery. Abradat fought like a lion for Cyrus, and fell. Over his body Panthea killed herself. When their servants learned this, they offered themselves up as victims on the grave of their master and their mistress. Cyrus mourned deeply for these two friends, and raised a stone to their memory, which can be seen to this day at Sardis. On it were these simple words, 'To Panthea, Abradat, and the most faithful of all servants.' You see, my sons, why, having loved such a woman, I can never think of another."

At that moment Cræsus, accompanied by some officers, entered the room in fetters. The captives all hastened towards him and overwhelmed him with questions.

The calm features of the old man were stern and grave, and his gentle eyes almost threatening. With a cold, imperious wave of his hand he motioned back the prince, and said, in a voice trembling with pain and reproach,—

"Touch not my hand, infatuated boy: you are not worthy of the love that I have given you. You have lied to your brother with fourfold treachery, you have betrayed your friends, you have deceived the poor child who is waiting for you at Naucratis, and, last of all, you have corrupted the heart of the unhappy daughter of Amasis."

At first Bartia listened calmly, but when Cræsus used the word "lied" he clinched his fists, and, stamping furiously with his foot upon the ground, he exclaimed,—

"Your years, your feebleness, and the gratitude I owe you protect you, old man, or else these foul-mouthed words should be your last!"

Cræsus received this outburst of righteous indignation with perfect composure, and said,—

"Cambyses and you are of the same blood; this silly

fury shows it. It would better befit you to repent your crimes, and pray me, your benefactor and friend, for forgiveness, and not add ingratitude to your other iniquities."

His words dispelled the anger of the insulted prince; his arms dropped lifeless to his side, and he grew pale as death. These apparent signs of repentance softened the old man's wrath; his love was strong enough to embrace the guilty as well as the innocent Bartia, and, taking the young man's hand in both of his, he spoke to him as a father might to a son whom in the chance-medley of a battle he had wounded to the death.

"Confess to me, poor, erring boy, how was it possible that your pure heart could be so easily seduced?"

Bartia heard these words with a shudder; his face flushed again, and his soul was filled to overflowing with bitter pain. For the first time he lost all faith in the justice of the gods. He called himself the victim of a horrible, relentless destiny: he felt what the guiltless stag feels when it falls exhausted and hears the coming of its hunters. His tender, childlike nature knew not how to meet these blows of fate. His body had been trained against physical ills, and his courage against earthly enemies, but, like his brother, he knew not how to bear the sorrow that had befallen him.

Zopyrus could not endure the sight of his friend's tears; he reproached angrily the old man for his sternness. Gyges looked beseechingly at his father. Araspes placed himself between Cræsus and the wretched Bartia; and Darius, after looking intently at them all for a little while, advanced towards the Lydian king in calm superiority.

"You are wronging and insulting each other without the accused knowing what is brought against him, or the judge hearing his defence. Tell us, Cræsus, for the sake of the friendship which has bound us together until to-day, what it is that makes you condemn Bartia so severely? You believed in his innocence but a little while ago."

The old man told them the affair of the letter, which, more than the testimony of his own eyes, more than the

discovery of the dagger, had destroyed all that remained of his belief in the virtue and purity of Nitetis. "I left the king," he ended, "firmly convinced of the iniquitous connection of your friend with that Egyptian woman, whose heart I had thought was a glass in which nothing but what is good and fair was reflected. Can you be angry with me if I blame him who breathed upon this pure mirror and stained, too, the not less spotless purity of his own soul?"

"How shall I convince you of my innocence?" exclaimed Bartia. "If you loved me, you would believe; if you cared for me——"

"My boy, to save your life, but a few minutes ago, I forfeited my own. When I heard that Cambyses had ordered your death, I hastened to him, besought him with a hundred prayers, and when my supplications were of no avail, I dared to hurl bitter reproaches at the furious man; his frail patience gave way at last, and he ordered the guards to behead me at once. Their captain, Give, arrested me; but gave me a reprieve till to-morrow. He is under obligations to me, and hopes to keep this act of mercy a secret. I rejoice that I need not survive my sons, and that I perish innocent."

These words raised a fresh outburst of protestations; though Darius, in the presence of the general violence, remained calm and moderate. He told the old man the whole course of the evening, proving the impossibility of Bartia's guilt; and, calling upon the latter to speak, the prince denied all complicity with Nitetis so decidedly, and confirmed his assertion with so awful an oath, that Cræsus' conviction began to waver, and at last to disappear. When Bartia had finished, the old man, after giving a deep sigh of relief, embraced him tenderly.

The more painfully they tried to solve the unhappy enigma, the more fruitless became their endeavors. All were, however, convinced that Nitetis loved Bartia and had sent the letter with an evil motive.

"Whoever saw her," said Darius, "when Cambyses announced to his guests that Bartia had chosen a wife, could have no doubt as to her passion. When she let the cup fall, I heard Phædime's father say that Egyptian

women seemed to feel great interest in the love-affairs of their brothers-in-law."

While they were speaking, the sun rose and shone clear and kindly into the prison.

"Mithra makes the parting hard for us," murmured Bartia.

"No," answered Crœsus, "he lights us lovingly on our way to eternity."

CHAPTER XX.

THE BIRD OF RA.

NITETIS, the innocent cause of these terrible events, had passed, since the birthday feast of the king, long hours of utter misery. Since those cruel words with which Cambyses had driven her from the banqueting-room, since her own inexplicable behavior, which had aroused his jealousy, not the slightest news, either from her offended lover or from her new mother and sister, had reached her. Every day since her arrival she had been with Cassandane and Atossa; but now, when she wished to go to them and explain her strange conduct, Candaules curtly commanded her not to leave the house.

Hitherto she had believed that a frank account of the contents of her last letter from home would clear up all these misunderstandings. In her mind's eye she saw Cambyses, already repentant of his violence and his foolish jealousy, coming to her to ask for forgiveness. At last a certain feeling of peace possessed her soul when she thought of what Ibycus had once said: "As a strong man suffers more violent attacks of fever than a weak one, so a fiercer jealousy torments the heart that deeply loves than one which loves only superficially." If the great love-poet was right, then Cambyses, whose jealousy was so quickly inflamed, must feel a passionate love for her. With these reflections mingled sad thoughts of

home and forebodings to which she could not close her heart.

When the mid-day sun rose hot in the heavens, and still there were no tidings from those she loved, a feverish disquiet seized her, which went on increasing until night. When it was dark, Boges entered and told her with bitter jeers that the king had her letter to Bartia, and that the gardener's boy, who was to deliver it to the prince, had been executed. The tortured nerves of his victim could not resist this new blow, and before Boges left the room he had to carry her, perfectly unconscious, to her bed-chamber, which he bolted carefully after him.

A few minutes later, two persons, a youth and an old man, came up through the trap-door that Boges had so minutely inspected two days before. The old man remained standing by the wall of the house, while his companion, obeying the gesture of invitation that came from a white hand in the window, vaulted into the room. Words of love, and the names Gaumata and Mandane, were softly whispered, while kisses and vows were exchanged. At last the old man clapped his hands, and the youth at this signal embraced the servant of Nitetis, sprang again through the window into the garden, hastened past the approaching admirers of the blue lily, slipped with his friend through the open trap-door, shut it carefully, and disappeared.

Mandane hastened into the room in which her mistress was accustomed to pass the evening; she had known that it was the habit of the princess, every night when the stars appeared, to go to the window towards the Euphrates, and sit there for hours looking out upon the river and the plain, without calling for a servant. She had felt, therefore, no fear of discovery from that quarter, and, guarded by the chief of the eunuchs himself, had been able quietly to await her lover.

Scarcely had she found her unconscious mistress when she perceived that the garden was full of people, and resounding with the voices of men and eunuchs, the trumpet, that was summoning the guards, predominating over all. At first she trembled for Gaumata; but when Boges appeared and whispered, "He has escaped," she ordered the

servants, whom she had previously sent out of the rooms on account of her rendezvous, but who now came hurrying back, to carry their mistress to her chamber, and she used all means for bringing Nitetis to herself.

The latter had scarcely opened her eyes when Boges entered the room and ordered the two eunuchs who followed him to fetter the maiden's arms. Without the strength to say a word, Nitetis suffered them to do their work. She made no reply when Boges said to her, as he left the house,—

“I hope you will like your cage, my captured bird; they are telling your lord that a king-martin has been in his dove-cot. Behave well, and think of the poor ill-treated Boges when the moist earth is about to cool you to-morrow. Yes, my dove, in death we recognize our true friends, for I will have you buried not in coarse linen, but in a shroud of softest silk. Farewell, my sweet one.”

When he had gone, she asked Mandane the meaning of it all. The maid, following the eunuch's counsel, told her that Bartia had obtained entrance to the hanging-gardens, and was seen by several of the Achæmenides trying to climb into her window. They had told the king of his brother's treason and feared everything from his jealousy. The frivolous girl, as she spoke, shed tears of bitter remorse, which touched her mistress, as showing genuine love and sympathy.

Nitetis looked down in despair at her manacled arms when Mandane had done speaking, and it took her some time to realize her situation. Then she read over the letter from home, and, writing upon it the few words “I am innocent,” commanded the sobbing maiden to give it, after her death, to the king's mother. In her box of ointment was a cosmetic, which she knew was fatal if taken in a large quantity. This poison she ordered to be brought to her, and she determined, when the hangman approached her, to die by her own hand.

From this moment she thought with joy of her last hour, and said, “He kills thee, but it is from love that he does it.” Then it occurred to her to write him a letter telling him of all her love; he would receive it after she

was dead, and therefore could not think that it was sent to save her life. The hope that the stern, inflexible man might perhaps shed remorseful tears upon her last greeting, filled her soul with sorrowful delight. In spite of her heavy chains, she wrote the following words:—

“Cambyses will not receive this writing till I am no more. It is to tell my lord that I love him better than the gods, the world, or even than my own young life. Let Cassandane and Atossa think kindly of me. From my mother’s letter it will be seen that I am innocent, and that I asked to see Bartia only for my poor sister’s sake. Boges has told me that I am condemned to death. Before the executioner can lay his hand upon me I will myself put an end to my life. I commit a crime that I may save you from one, Cambyses.”

This letter she intrusted, together with that of her mother, to the weeping Mandane, with the request that both should be given to the king after her death. Then she threw herself down and prayed to the gods of her country, asking pardon of them for her apostasy. The longer she prayed and sang, the more her heart was turned to those whom she had so weakly denied. Almost all the prayers she knew were about the life beyond the grave in the kingdom of Osiris, in the lower world, where the two-and-forty judges of the dead gave to every soul its sentence, according to the doom of the goddess of Truth, and of the recording spirit Thoth, and where she hoped to meet her loved ones again, if her unsanctified soul did not have to pass through the bodies of beasts, and if her flesh, the keeper of that soul, were preserved unharmed.

This “if” filled her with painful anxiety. The doctrine that the welfare of the soul depended upon the safe-keeping of the earthly remains, had been impressed upon her from her childhood. She believed in this superstition, which raised the Pyramids and hollowed out the rocks, and she trembled as she thought that her corpse, after the Persian custom, would be given over to the dogs, and vultures, and all the powers of destruction, and her soul be robbed of every hope of eternal life. Then again it came to her mind to leave her old gods and turn to the spirits of the light. They gave back the dead body to the dust of

which it was made, and kept the soul for evermore. As she raised her hands, however, to the mighty sun, who was putting to flight, with his golden arrows, the mist over the Euphrates, and tried to sing the praises of Mithra in her new-learned songs, her voice failed, and instead of him whom the Persians worship she saw the face of the god of day, the great Ra, whom she had so often exalted in Egypt, and instead of the hymns of the Magi, she sang the song with which the priests of her country were wont to greet the morning sun :

“To the mighty god Ra bend lowly the knee,
For the beautiful child of the heavens is he.
Each passing day he vanishes, dies,
Again, with new splendor, triumphant to rise.

“We praise thee, exalt thee, while bright on thy way
Through the heavens thou passest, O great God of Day,
The maker of all on this fair earth below,
As far as the sky bends its glorious bow.

“Thou drivest far from us all evil, all strife,
To the pure and the lovely thou givest sweet life.
To thee be all glory, while bright on thy way
Through the heavens thou passest, O great God of Day.

“The gods all tremble in fear and delight
When thou comest, lord of heaven, in thy power and might.”

Sweet consolation filled her soul as she gazed, with her eyes dim with tears and her heart filled with the thoughts of her childhood, towards the young light, whose beams were yet too soft to dazzle her. Then she looked down into the plain below, where the Euphrates was flowing, like the Nile, with his yellow waters. Countless villages, as in her own home, looked forth from their rich grain-fields and fig-orchards; to the west, stretched for miles the hunting-park of the king, with its lofty cypresses and chestnut-trees. On every leaf and stalk glittered the dew of the morning, and from her garden she could hear the voices of innumerable birds. A light breath of air bore the scent of roses to her, and played with the tops of the palms, that grew on the river's bank and on all the meadows round about. Often had she thought how beautiful these trees were, and likened them, when

the storm would bow their lofty heads and bend their slender stems from side to side, to the dancing-women. How often had she said to herself that here must be the home of the Phœnix, the bird from the land of palms, who, as the priests told, came every five hundred years to the temple of Ra, at Heliopolis, where it consumed itself in the burning incense to rise again more beautiful from its ashes, and, after three days, to fly back to its Eastern home! And while she thought of the bird, and wished, like it, to rise to happier fortune from the ashes of her misery, there flew from the cypresses, which surrounded the house of her love and her sorrow, a large bird with shining feathers, soaring higher and higher and then sinking gently down upon a palm before the window. Such a bird she had never before seen, and it could be no common one, for a golden chain was hanging to its foot, and its tail seemed to be not of feathers, but sunbeams. This must be Benno, the bird of Ra. Again she fell upon her knees devoutly and sang the old phœnix-song, while she never turned her eyes from the radiant creature of the air:

“High o'er thy head I fly,
 Swift through the air;
 Seest thou in all the sky
 Aught half so fair?
 'Tis He hath fashioned me—
 Glorious one—
 Like to himself to be,
 Child of the Sun.
 Ravishing loveliness,
 Mine from my birth,
 Such as that ye possess,
 Flowers of Earth.
 Whence I have come to thee,
 Whither I go,
 My sacred mystery
 Thou canst not know.
 All the dark past I know,
 All yet to come;
 Look toward the East, for, lo!
 There is my home.
 Lost in the distant skies,
 Seeming to die;
 Ra, god of day, I rise,
 Mighty on high.”

The bird listened, turning its plumed head in an arching

way from side to side, and when the song was ended it flew away. Nitetis gazed kindly after the supposed Phoenix, which was in reality a bird of Paradise that had broken the chain fastening it to a tree in the park. A strange confidence now filled her heart, for she thought that the god Ra had sent to her this bird, whose form she should take when a purified spirit.

With hope renewed, Nitetis lay down upon her divan, and soon sank into a deep, dreamless sleep. At her side watched Mandane, tormented by pangs of conscience. How willingly would she hold back the sun, which was to light her mistress to the grave, and from henceforward live in endless night, if she could but undo the deeds of yesterday! The good-hearted but frivolous girl kept calling herself a heinous murderess. A hundred times she resolved to confess the truth and save Nitetis; but every time fear and the love of life prevailed over the good impulses of her weak heart. If she confessed, she was certain of death, and she felt so formed for life; she shuddered so at the grave; she hoped so much from the future. Had she feared but endless captivity she would perhaps have revealed all; but die, die, she could not. And could she save the condemned if she did confess? Had not her mistress sent a message to Bartia by the luckless boy? And the correspondence had been discovered, and therefore Nitetis was lost without the aggravation of her maid's misconduct.

Mandane knelt, weeping, as the sun went up, beside the couch of her mistress, and was lost in utter astonishment at her calm sleep.

Boges, too, had passed a sleepless night, but it was from joy. His deputy and fellow-officer, Candaules, whom he hated, had been executed at once by the king's command, on account of his supposed negligence or corruption; Nitetis had not only fallen, but was doomed to a shameful death; the influence of the queen-mother had received a severe blow; and, lastly, he rejoiced as much over the consciousness of his own superiority, evinced by his successful scheme, as at the hope of soon again, through his darling Phædime, being the all-powerful favorite of former days. The sentence of death that hung over Cræsus and the

young nobles was equally pleasing to him, for while they lived a discovery of his plot was not impossible.

Day was breaking as he left the king's room to betake himself to Phædime. The haughty Persian had not yet gone to rest, but was awaiting the eunuch in feverish impatience; for the rumor of what had happened had penetrated into the seraglio, and reached her ears. She lay on the purple divan of her dressing-room, covered with a light silk garment, and wearing on her feet yellow slippers heavy with turquoises and pearls. When she heard Boges coming, she dismissed her servants, and, springing up, ran to meet and overwhelm him with a hundred disconnected questions, all concerning her enemy Nitetis.

"Easy, my little dove," said Boges, laying his fat hand on her shoulder, "easy; if you don't calm yourself and listen to what I say, without a word or a question, not a syllable will I tell you. Yes, my golden queen, I have much to tell you, which would take till to-morrow to relate were you to interrupt me at your pleasure. Ah, my pretty lamb, I have much to do yet. First, to be present at an Egyptian donkey-ride, and then to see an Egyptian execution. But I will begin my history at the beginning. Cry, laugh, scream as much as you want, but not a question till I have finished. My sweet love, I have well deserved these caresses. Now I am comfortably seated, and can begin.

"There lived in Persia a great king, who had many wives, of whom he loved and honored, most of all, Phædime. Now it happened that he asked Amasis, the King of Egypt, for his daughter. Then he sent a great embassy, with his own brother, as his wooer to Sais——"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Phædime, impatiently. "I want to know what happened to-day."

"Patience, patience, my furious wind of Ades! If you interrupt me again, I will go out and tell the trees my story. Permit me to live over again my successful career. As I am telling you this story, I am like a sculptor who has put down his chisel to contemplate his completed work."

"No, no!" broke in Phædime. "I cannot hear now

what I know perfectly well. I am dying of impatience: for hours I have been waiting here, wild with excitement; every fresh rumor that the servants and eunuchs hastened to me with increased it. I am in a fever, and can endure delay no longer. Ask of me what you will, but release me from this terrible anxiety. Afterwards I will listen to you all day if you like."

Boges smiled complacently, and said, rubbing his hands, "When I was a child I had no greater delight than in watching a fish wriggling on the hook. Now you, the fairest of all golden carp, are hanging on my line, and I cannot let you go till I have gloated over your impatience."

Phædime sprang from the couch that she shared with Boges, stamped with her foot, and screamed like a naughty child. This behavior seemed to afford exquisite delight to the eunuch, for he rubbed his hands ecstatically and laughed till the tears ran down his puffy cheeks; then, having emptied several glasses of wine to the health of his tormented companion, he resumed his story:—

"It did not escape me that Cambyses sent Bartia to the field purely out of jealousy and nothing else. The haughty woman, to whom I was to give no orders, seemed to me to care as little for young golden-head as a Jew for pork, or an Egyptian for white beans. Still, I determined to feed the king's suspicion, and by means of it to disgrace this impudent intruder, who seemed to be succeeding in ousting us from the king's favor. I long sought in vain for a plausible scheme. At last, when the new-year feast came, and all the priests of the empire assembled at Babylon; when for eight days the city was full of shouting and feasting and drinking; and when even in the court there was so much confusion that I had little time to think over my plans, the kind Ameschappenta brought me, just when I was beginning to despair, a youth that Angramainius himself seemed to have made for my plot. Gaumata, the brother of Oropastes, had come to Babylon to be present at the great feast. When I saw the young man for the first time at his brother's, I thought it was a ghost, so like was he to Bartia. After I had finished my business with Oropastes, the boy conducted me to my carriage. I betrayed none

of my astonishment, overwhelmed him with politeness, and asked him to come and see me. He did come, and I had the best wine brought up, plied him with it, and found, not for the first time, that grape-juice gives a tongue to the dumb. The boy told me, in his intoxication, that he had come to Babylon principally to see a maiden, who was the chief servant of the Egyptian. He had loved her, he told me, since childhood, but that his brother had higher views for him, and had procured for the fair Mandane a situation in the household of the new wife of the king, that so the two might be separated. At last he prayed me to contrive an interview for him with the girl.

"I listened kindly, but made difficulties, and told him, in conclusion, to come and inquire of me the next day. He came; and I told him that something might be done if he would obey me implicitly. He consented, went back to Rhagæ at my command, and returned the day before yesterday secretly to Babylon, where I kept him concealed in my house. Bartia, in the mean while, had also returned. Now was the time to arouse the king's jealousy, and to destroy the Egyptian with one blow. By your humiliation I awaked the jealous wrath of your relations, and prepared everything for my undertaking.

"Fate was especially kind to me. You know how Nitetis behaved at the banquet; but you do not know that the same evening she sent a letter to the palace for Bartia. Her awkward messenger allowed himself to be detected, and was executed the same night by the king's orders. I took care that Nitetis should be as entirely cut off from her friends as if she were in the nest of the Simurg. The rest you know."

"But how did Gaumata escape?"

"Through a trap-door that is known only to me, and which stood open for the fugitives. All worked to a charm. Why, I even succeeded in obtaining a dagger that Bartia had lost in the hunt, and in placing it under the window of Nitetis. In order to keep the prince away, and to prevent him, while all this was going on, from coming near the king or other reliable witnesses, I got

the Greek merchant Colasus, who sells Milesian goods at Babylon,—and who will do a great deal for me, because I order all the woollen stuffs for the seraglio of him,—to write Bartia a letter in the name of his lady-love, asking him to meet her alone, when the Tistar star rose, at the first station from the Euphrates gate. I had bad luck with this letter, however, for the messenger to whom I intrusted it gave it to some one else, probably Gaumata.

“I was not a little frightened when I learned that Bartia was to have a supper that evening with his friends; still, it was too late to go back; and witnesses like your father, Crœsus, and Intaphernes would outweigh whatever might be said by Darius, Gyges, and Araspes. They testified man against man; but, finally, all went well. The young gentlemen are condemned to death; and Crœsus, who has been reviling the king, has seen his last hour. In regard to the Egyptian, the chief scribe has made out the following decree. Listen to it, my dove, and rejoice:—

“‘The adulterous daughter of the King of Egypt, Nitetis, as punishment for her foul crimes, is sentenced by the law as follows: She shall be put on an ass, and taken through the streets of the city, that the people of Babylon may see that Cambyses can punish a king’s daughter as sternly as his judges a beggar. When the sun is set, the wanton shall be buried alive. The execution of this sentence is intrusted to the chief eunuch Boges.

“‘ARIABIGNES,

“‘The Chief of the Scribes for the King.’

“I had scarcely put these lines in my sleeve when the queen-mother, with her clothing rent, entered the room, conducted by Atossa. Then there was weeping, and howling, and curses, and reproaches. But the king turned a deaf ear to their prayers and adjurations. And I believe that Cassandane and Atossa would have followed Crœsus and Bartia, if respect for his father’s soul had not kept back the furious son from laying hands on the widow of Cyrus. For Nitetis, Cassandane had not a word to say: she seems as much convinced of her guilt as you and I. From the enamored Gaumata we have nothing more to

fear. I have hired three men to give him, before he reaches Rhagæ, a cool bath in the Euphrates; and the fish and worms may make holiday,—ha! ha!”

Phædime joined in his merriment, and, heaping upon him all the pet names that he had taught her, she hung a heavy chain of diamonds around his neck.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE END OF THE CONSPIRACY.

THE news of what had happened, and of what was expected, had filled all Babylon before noon. The streets swarmed with men, who waited with impatience to see the strange spectacle of the punishment of a faithless royal spouse. The constables needed all their authority to keep back the thronging crowd. When the report of the impending execution of Bartia and his friends had spread through the town, the cries of the people—who had been thoroughly besotted at the natal feast and on the few days following, by the palm-wine, and no longer able to control their excitement—took another form. Drunken men assembled together, and went through the streets shouting, “Bartia, the noble son of Cyrus, is to be killed!”

The women heard these words in their quiet rooms, and, escaping from their keepers, hastened, forgetful of their veils, out into the open air, and followed the men, who were howling with frenzy. The dear delight of seeing a happy sister brought down to the dust was lost in their sorrow at the fate of the young favorite. Men, women, and children stormed, screamed, cursed, and urged each other to more violent outbursts of rage. All the workshops were quickly emptied, the traders shut up their places, and the schoolboys and slaves—for whom, at the king's birthday, there were eight days' holiday—

made use of their freedom to shout the loudest, often without knowing in the least what it was all for.

At last the confusion became so great that the constables found themselves perfectly powerless, and a detachment of the body-guard came up to restore order. As soon as their glittering armor and long lances appeared, the populace fell back, and took refuge in the side streets, only to collect together in fresh crowds when the soldiers had passed.

At the Bel gate, through which the western highway passed, the crowd was the greatest; for it was said that at this gate, through which she had entered Babylon, the Egyptian was to be cast out in shame. There was, therefore, a larger force of whip-bearers at this place, who were there to make room for any traveller who might wish to go through. Few, indeed, left the city, for curiosity was greater than any consideration of pleasure or business; and of those who came in almost all stopped at the gate to see the show that was to be given to the expectant crowd.

The sun stood high in the heavens, and it wanted but a little while to the time appointed for the exposure of Nitetis in the streets, when a party of travellers approached the gate in great haste. First came a "harmamaxa," as it was called, drawn by four horses, then a two-wheeled cart, and, last, a baggage-wagon, harnessed with mules. In the first vehicle sat a handsome, stately man of some fifty years, in Persian court-dress, and an old man in long white garments; while in the cart were several slaves in simple tunics, and wearing broad-brimmed straw hats on their close-cropped heads. In the baggage-wagon sat an elderly man, in the dress of a Persian servant.

The driver of the first team had great trouble in making a way for his horses through the throng. Close to the gate he had to stop and call some constables. "Make room for us!" he shouted to an officer of the police, who was coming up to the vehicle with his people. "The royal post has no time to lose, and I am bringing a distinguished person, who will make you pay for every minute of delay."

"Softly, my son," returned the officer. "You see it

is much easier to get out of Babylon than to get in. Whom do you bring?"

"A distinguished person, who has a free pass from the king. Quick, make room!"

"Hm! the suite doesn't look royal."

"What business is that of yours? The passport——"

"I must see it before I let you in."

These words he addressed partly to the travellers, whom he scrutinized carefully and suspiciously, and partly to the driver.

While the man in Persian dress looked for the passport in the sleeve of his robe, the constable turned to one of his comrades. "Did you ever see such an equipage? My name is not Give if there is not something wrong with these people. The lowest carpet-spreader of the king travels with more followers than this man, who has a passport and wears the dress of a guest at the royal table."

The object of his suspicion handed him at this moment a roll of silk scented with musk, on which were to be seen the king's seal and some writing. The constable took it, and examined the seal. "That is all right," he muttered, and then began to read it. He had scarcely made out the first lines when he looked up sharply at the travellers, and, exclaiming, "Here, fellows, surround the wagon; the man is an impostor!" he seized the bridles of the horses.

After he had convinced himself that no escape was possible, he again approached the stranger. "You carry a passport that does not belong to you. Gyges, the son of Croesus, for whom you are trying to pass yourself off, is now in prison, and will be executed to-day. You have no resemblance to him, and will repent this attempt at deception. Get out, and come with me."

The traveller paid no heed to this command, and, on the contrary, asked the captain, in broken Persian, to come into the carriage with him, for he had something important to tell him. The officer hesitated a moment; but when he saw a fresh company of the whip-bearers coming up, he beckoned to them to hold the horses, and got into the *harmamaxa*.

The stranger looked at the captain, with a smile, and said, "Do I look like an impostor?"

"No; for if your accent shows you are no Persian, your appearance is that of a noble."

"I am a Greek, and have come here to do Cambyses a great service. The passport of Gyges, who is my friend, was given to me by him, when he was in Egypt, in case I should want to come to Persia. I am ready to justify myself to the king, and not only fear nothing, but look for great favor on account of the news I bring. Conduct me, under guard, if your duty so requires it, at once to Cræsus. He will be my security, and will send your men, whom you seem to require to-day, back to you at once."

The officer was much impressed by the dignity of the stranger, so different from Persian obsequiousness; and as he had been on guard the day before at the palace, he related all that had happened. The Greek followed the story in great agitation, and shook his head repeatedly in utter disbelief, when he heard of the alleged offences of Nitetis and Bartia. The impending death-sentences, especially that of Cræsus, moved him very much. The sorrowful look passed quickly from his expressive features to be replaced first, by one of reflection, and then by one of joy. All at once his grave dignity seemed to abandon him; laughing joyfully, he seized the hand of the astonished officer, and asked,—

"Would you rejoice if Bartia were to be saved?"

"Inexpressibly!"

"Well, then, I engage that you shall have two talents if you manage that I should see the king before the first of the sentences is executed."

"But how can I, a poor captain?"

"You must, you must!"

"But I cannot."

"I know that it is almost impossible for a stranger to obtain an interview with the king; but my message admits of no delay. I can prove the innocence of Bartia and his friends. Do you hear? I can do that. Do you think you can obtain what I want?"

"How is it possible?"

"Do not question, but act. Did you not say that Darius was one of the condemned?"

"Yes."

"I have heard that his father was a man of great importance."

"He is the first in the kingdom after the children of Cyrus."

"Then take me to him at once. He will receive me kindly when he learns that I can save his son."

"Extraordinary stranger, so much hope speaks from your words that I——"

"That you believe me. Quick, quick! make your men separate this crowd, and accompany us to the palace."

The officer trusted the inexplicable foreigner; and, springing out of the wagon and cracking his whip, he called to his underlings, "This noble gentleman has come to prove Bartia's innocence. Follow me, friends, and clear the way."

At that moment there appeared a party of mounted soldiers of the body-guard; the officer hurried towards their commander and begged him, seconded by the shouts of the crowd, to escort the strangers to the palace. In the mean time the traveller vaulted upon a horse of one of his servants, and followed the Persians, who were clearing the way for him.

Swift as the wind the hopeful news flew through the whole city. As the horsemen proceeded, the crowd opened more readily, the more thundering grew the shouts of the people, and the more like a triumphal march became the stranger's ride.

In a few minutes they drew rein at the palace-gate. Scarcely had the brazen doors opened for them when another party appeared, at whose head rode the stately form of the gray-haired Hystaspes, who was dressed in brown mourning garments rent in pieces. He was seated upon a horse painted blue, whose mane and tail were cut off. He had come to beseech the king's mercy for his son. Scarcely did the officer of police see the old man than, giving a shout of joy, he threw himself from his horse, and, with his arms crossed, told of the hopes that the stranger had excited. Hystaspes beckoned to the latter,

who, seated on his horse, bowed deeply before him, and confirmed all that the whip-bearer had said. The old Persian now became infected with the same hope, and, telling the stranger to follow, he conducted him to the palace, and there went in search of some chamberlain, who could present them to the king, telling the Greek to wait at the door of the royal apartment.

Cambyzes lay, pale as death, on his purple divan, when his uncle entered the room. Perfect stillness filled the wide chamber, through whose open windows poured in the dazzling light and oppressive heat of a Babylonian day in May. A huge dog of the Epirote breed was the only creature that dared to break the silence of the room; he was uttering whimpering howls, for Cambyzes had just given the fawning animal a kick with his powerful foot.

Before the chamberlain announced Hystaspes the king sprang from the couch: he could endure this inactivity no longer; his wrath and suffering threatened to suffocate him. The howling of the dog suggested a relief to his tortured brain, which was thirsting for forgetfulness: "To the chase!" he cried, to his terrified courtiers, as he sprang up.

The huntsmen, the grooms, and the superintendents of the dog-trainers hurried to obey their master's order. He called after them, "I will ride the unbroken stallion Reksch. Get ready the hawks, unloose all the dogs, summon everybody that can throw a spear. We will clean out the park."

Then he fell back upon the divan, as if these few words had exhausted his powerful frame. He did not notice the entrance of Hystaspes, for his gloomy looks were absently following the motes that were dancing in the sunbeams.

The father of Darius dared not address Cambyzes, but placed himself in the window, and, by breaking the light, called the king's attention to him. Cambyzes looked at him and his rent clothing, first angrily, and then with a bitter smile, and asked,—

"What do you want?"

"Victory to the king! Thy poor servant and uncle has come to ask for his sovereign's grace."

"Arise and depart; there is no grace for perjurers and false witnesses. It is better to have a dead than a dishonored son."

"If Bartia and Darius were innocent——"

"Dare you impeach my judgment?"

"Far be it from me; what the king does is good, and allows of no contradiction. Yet——"

"Silence, I say! I will not have these things spoken of again. You are to be pitied as a father; but to me, also, these last hours have brought misery enough. I pity you, old man. I can no more spare your son's punishment than I can undo his crime."

"But if Bartia were innocent; if the gods——"

"Do you think the immortals will assist deceivers and perjurers?"

"No, my king; but a new witness has appeared, who——"

"A new witness? I would give half my kingdom if I could be convinced of the innocence of men standing so near my house."

"Conquest to my ruler! Without is a Greek, who, to judge by his figure and bearing, seems to be one of the noblest of his race; he insists that he can prove Bartia's innocence."

The king laughed bitterly. "A Greek? Perhaps a relative of Bartia's lady-love? What can this stranger know of my affairs? I know these Ionian starvelings: insolent and shameless, they intrude everywhere, and think with their tricks and cunning to deceive us. How much have you paid for your new witness, my uncle? A lie falls as easily from the lips of a Greek as a blessing from those of a Magus; and well I know they all have their price. I am curious to see your witness, however. Call him. If he has any intention of lying, he had better stay where he is, and reflect that where the head of a son of Cyrus falls little account will be made of that of a Greek."

Before the foreigner entered the hall, the ushers fastened a cloth over his mouth, and commanded him to prostrate himself before the king; he walked with dignity up to Cambyzes, who was looking keenly at him,

and threw himself down and kissed the earth after the Persian custom.

"Who are you?"

"I am an Hellenic noble,—my name is Phanes,—my country Attica. For ten years I have served, not without fame, as commander of the Grecian soldiers of Amasis."

"Are you the one to whose skilful generalship the Egyptians owe their victories in Cyprus?"

"I am he."

"What brings you to Persia?"

"The glory of your name, O Cambyses, and the desire to devote my sword to your service."

"Nothing else? Be sincere, and remember a single lie will cost you your life. We Persians have different ideas of truth from those of the Greeks."

"A lie is as hateful to me as to you."

"Then speak."

"A third thing, indeed, brought me here, and that I will tell you later. It concerns something exceedingly important, and to discuss it would require longer time than we have now."

"I should like to listen to-day, of all other days, to something new. You are a godsend, for I never had greater need of distraction. Come with me to the hunt."

"I would gladly go with you, if——"

"No conditions with a king! Do you love the chase?"

"I have struck down many a lion in the Libyan Desert."

"Then come with me," said Cambyses, and he was about to leave the room, when Hystaspes again threw himself at his feet, and cried,—

"Shall my son, shall thy brother, die guiltless? By the soul of thy father, who called me his truest friend, I adjure thee to hear this stranger."

Cambyses stood still; his brow grew dark, and his voice threatening, while his eyes flashed fiercely as he said to the Greek, "Tell what you know; but remember that in every false word you utter your death-sentence."

Phanes listened calmly. "From the sun and my king," he said, "naught can be concealed. How can a poor

mortal shut out the truth from the mighty? The noble Hystaspes says that I can prove the innocence of your brother, but I can only hope and wish to accomplish so great a thing. The gods have given me a trace by which we may find the truth concerning yesterday's events. Judge yourself whether I have conjectured too rashly or hoped too quickly. But remember that it is my wish to serve you, and that my error, if I am wrong, is therefore to be pardoned. Remember, too, that there is nothing certain in the world, and that each of us calls that sure which in reality he only thinks probable."

"You speak well, and by your words remind me of— Confusion! Speak, will you? and be brief. The hounds are baying in the courtyard now."

"I was still in Egypt when your embassy came thither to bring Nitetis to Persia. In the house of my excellent friend and countrywoman, Rhodope, I became acquainted with Cræsus and his son; and, though I saw your brother and his friends only for a moment, nevertheless I remember well the handsome face of the royal youth, for I looked upon his features afterwards at Samos, when I visited the workshop of the great sculptor Theodorus."

"You met him at Samos?"

"No; but Theodorus had given to the image of the sun-god, which he was making for the temple of Apollo at Delphi, the features of your brother, which were deeply impressed upon his recollection."

"Your story does not begin with much probability. How is it possible to make the likeness of a face which one has not before one?"

"Theodorus has finished this master-piece, and, if you would like to test his artistic powers, will gladly make another one for you."

"I want it not. Continue."

"On my journey hither, which, thanks to your arrangements, by changing horses every twenty miles, I accomplished in a short time——"

"How came you, a stranger, to have the use of the post-horses?"

"By means of the passport of the son of Cræsus,

which by chance fell into my possession when he compelled me, in order to save my life, to exchange clothes with him."

"A Lydian can deceive a fox; a Syrian, a Lydian; and an Ionian, all three," murmured the king, with a smile. "Yes, Crœsus told me about that. Poor Crœsus!" At these words gloom again fell upon his face, as he tried to smooth away with his hand the furrows from his brow.

The Athenian continued: "I made my journey without any delay, until I was detained this morning, at the first hour after midnight, by a strange occurrence." The king listened with increased attention, as he urged the Athenian, who was speaking the foreign language with much difficulty, to greater haste. "We were between the third and fourth stations from Babylon, and were hoping to reach the city by sunrise. My mind, dwelling on wrongs still unavenged, could find no rest; while the old Egyptian at my side, lulled by the monotonous sound of the bells on the harness and of the ripples breaking on the river-bank, was quietly sleeping. The night was wonderfully still and beautiful: the moonlight made the landscape as bright as day: not a wagon, not a traveller on foot or on horseback, had we met for an hour. All the people, they had told us, had gone up to the city to your birthday feast. At last an irregular sound of hoofs and bells struck upon my ear, and a few minutes later I heard distinct cries for help. I ordered my Persian servant to dismount from his horse, sprang into his saddle, ordered the drivers in the cart which held my slaves, to urge on their mules, unsheathed my sword and dagger, put spurs to my horse, and hastened in the direction from which the cries came. I had not ridden a minute when I saw a terrible sight. Three ruffianly-looking men were dragging a youth, who wore the white dress of a Magus, from his horse, and had stunned him with their blows, and, when I came up to them, were in the act of throwing him into the Euphrates, which at this place washes the roots of the palms and fig-trees that grow along the high-road. Uttering my Greek war-cry, which has made many another tremble, I threw myself upon the

murderers, who, like all men of their kind, were cowards, and took to their heels when they saw one of their comrades killed. I let the wretches go, and bent over the frightfully-wounded boy. Who can describe my astonishment when I thought I recognized in him your brother Bartia? Yes, they were the same features that I had seen at Naucratis, and in the workshop of Theodorus."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Hystaspes.

"Perhaps too wonderful to be credible," added the king. "Take care, Greek; remember, my arm reaches very far. I will have the truth of your story tested."

"I am accustomed," answered the Athenian, "to follow the teaching of the wise Pythagoras, whose fame has perhaps reached you, and always to consider before I speak whether I shall repent it or not in the future."

"That sounds well; but, by Mithra, I have known one who always had the name of that teacher in her mouth, but in deeds showed herself the aptest disciple of Angraminius. You know the traitress who is to be crushed to-day like a poisonous adder?"

"Will you pardon me," asked Phanes, who had noticed the intense pain visible in the king's face, "if I tell you of another saying of our great master?"

"Speak!"

"Every good is lost as soon as gained; therefore take it patiently when the gods afflict you. Murmur not, but remember that no man's burdens are heavier than he can bear. Touch the wound in your heart as gently as an aching eye. For the sufferings of the soul there are but two remedies—hope and patience."

Cambyses listened to these golden sayings of Pythagoras, and smiled bitterly at the word "patience;" but what Phanes said pleased him, and he ordered the Athenian to continue.

"We bore," resumed Phanes, "the lifeless youth to my carriage, and brought him to the next station. There he opened his eyes, and, looking anxiously at me, asked me my name and where he was. The host of the station stood near us, and therefore, not to stultify my pass, I had to pretend that I was Gyges, the son of Cræsus. The wounded man appeared to know the young Lydian,

for he shook his head and said, 'You are not he.' After this he closed his eyes again, and fell into a violent fever. Then we undressed him, bled him, and bound up his wounds. My Persian servant, who had been a groom in the stables of Amasis, and who had seen Bartia there, persisted in asserting that our patient was no other than your brother. The host also, when we had washed the blood off the face of the youth, said that it was, without doubt, your father's younger son. In the mean while my Egyptian companion had gone out, and brought from his medicine-chest, without which no Egyptian leaves home, a draught, which he gave to the sick man. It had so wonderful an effect that in a few hours it calmed his fevered blood, and when the sun rose he opened his eyes. Now we bowed ourselves before him as being your brother, and asked him whether he wished to be taken to the palace at Babylon. He said 'No,' excitedly, and insisted that he was not the person we took him for."

"Who can be so like Bartia? Speak, man! tell me," broke in the king.

"He declared that he was the brother of your high-priest, that his name was Gaumata, and that we should find it in the passport which was in his sleeve. The host found the paper, and confirmed what the sick man, who was now again seized by the delirium and was talking incoherently, had said."

"Did you understand what he said?"

"Yes; he kept repeating the same thing: the hanging-gardens seemed to occupy his thoughts. He must have escaped a great peril and have had a rendezvous with a woman named Mandane."

"Mandane?" murmured Cambyses; "Mandane? If I am not mistaken, that is the name of the head-servant of the daughter of Amasis."

The quick ears of the Greek caught these words; he reflected for a moment, then smiled, and said, "Loose your captive friends, for I will warrant with my head that Bartia was not in the hanging-gardens."

The king looked with an astonished but kindly expression at the bold speaker, whose dignity and sense of independence were something new and pleasing to the despot,

sick of the flattery and fawning of the Persian court. In his presence, as in that of Nitetis, he forgot for the time that he was king, for they met as man to man. This Greek had come to give him back, perhaps, his lost, his worse than lost, treasures. But who would receive the life of a foreign adventurer as a security for the sons of the first of the Persians?

Still, the proposal of Phanes did not anger the king. He laughed at the boldness of the Greek, who, in his eagerness, had thrown off the cloth that covered his mouth, and said, "It seems to me, by Mithra, as if you were going to bring us good. I accept your proposal. If the captives are guilty, then you, in spite of your conjectures, are pledged to pass your whole life as my servant at this court; if you can prove what my soul longs for, then I will make you the richest of your countrymen."

Phanes only smiled, and asked, "Will you allow me to put a few questions to you and to the officers of your court?"

"Ask what you please."

At this moment the chief huntsman entered and announced that all was ready.

"Let them wait," answered the king. "I do not know whether I shall hunt to-day. Where is Bischen, the captain of the whip-bearers?"

Datis, "The Eye of the King," or, in modern terms, minister of police, hastened from the room, and after a few minutes, which Phanes made use of to interrogate several of the dignitaries who were there, he returned with the guard.

"What are the prisoners doing?" demanded Cambyses of him.

"Victory to the king! They are awaiting death calmly, for it is sweet to die by thy command."

"Did you hear their conversation?"

"Yes, my sovereign."

"Are they confessing their guilt to each other?"

"Mithra alone knows the heart, but, my king, thou wouldst believe in their innocence, as did thy poor servant, if thou couldst hear them?"

The captain looked anxiously up at the king, lest these

words should have aroused his wrath, but Cambyses took them in good part.

Suddenly a terrible thought flashed across him, and he asked, scarcely audibly, "When was Cræsus executed?"

The guard trembled at these words; a cold sweat stood out on his forehead, and his lips could scarcely stammer the words, "He is—he has—we thought——"

"What did you think?" demanded Cambyses, in whose breast a new hope was dawning. "You have not executed my command? Is Cræsus still among the living? Speak; tell me; I will know the truth."

The man writhed like a worm at the king's feet, and stammered at last, holding up his hands for mercy, "Pardon, pardon, your Majesty! I am a poor man, and have thirty children, of whom fifteen——"

"Tell me whether he lives or not?"

"He lives; I thought that it would be no harm to grant him, to whom I owe everything, a couple of hours, that he might——"

"Enough," said the king, giving a sigh of relief. "Your disobedience shall go unpunished; and, since you have so many children, the treasurer shall pay you two talents. Go to the captives, bring hither Cræsus, and tell the others that if they are innocent they may be of good courage."

"My lord is the light of the world, and an ocean of grace."

"Bartia and his friends need no longer be confined. They may walk, guarded by you, in the palace court. Datis, do you go at once to the hanging-gardens and command Boges to give the Egyptian a reprieve. Send, too, to the station described by the Athenian, and have the wounded man, who is lying there, brought here under safe convoy."

Datis was about to go, when Phanes detained him, and asked, "Will you allow me, my king, to make one suggestion?"

"Speak!"

"It seems to me that the chief of the eunuchs can give us the most reliable information, for the delirious

youth joins this person's name with that of his own mistress."

"Hasten, Datis, and bring Boges hither."

"Oropastes, the brother of Gaumata, and Mandane, also, should be examined: the latter is, I am told, the head-servant of the Egyptian."

"Bring them, Datis."

"If, indeed, Nitetis herself——"

At these words of the Athenian the king turned pale, and a cold shudder ran through him. What would he not have given to see his betrothed again? But for all his power and might, he still feared to look upon her, and he cried to Datis, "Go, bring Mandane and Boges; let the Egyptian princess remain well guarded in the hanging-gardens."

The Athenian bowed, and said, "It is for you alone to command here."

The king looked less sternly upon Phanes, and sat down again on the purple divan, resting his forehead upon his hand and gazing upon the ground. The form of her once so loved stood before him; he could not banish it, and the thought that that face could not deceive him, that Nitetis was innocent, rooted itself in his now hoping heart. If Bartia were innocent, all the other mistakes were conceivable. He even wished at that moment to go himself to the hanging-gardens and ask her forgiveness. Such was the hold that his passionate love had taken upon this man.

When Cræsus entered the room, Cambyses awoke from his reverie, and raised kindly up the old man, who had fallen at his feet. "You have offended me, but I will deal leniently with you, because I remember the last words of my dying father, who commanded me to respect you always as my counsellor and friend. Take back your life, and forget my anger, as I will forget your disrespect. Now, listen to this man's statement; he asserts that he knows you, and then tell me what you think."

Cræsus welcomed his Athenian friend heartily, and gave the fullest attention to what he had to say. When Phanes had done, the old man raised his hands, and exclaimed,—

"Forgive me, eternal gods, that I ever doubted your justice! Is it not wonderful, Cambyses? My son risked his life to save that of this noble Greek, whom the immortals have brought to Persia that he might pay back tenfold what Gyges did for him."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BOX OF OINTMENT.

PHANES, with genuine Attic acuteness, had divined, from what he heard, the exact truth of this unhappy affair. It did not even escape him that there must be some foul play, for how, except by treachery, could Bartia's dagger have been in the hanging-gardens?

While he was communicating this suspicion to the king, Oropastes entered the room. The king looked fiercely at him, and asked,—

"Have you a brother?"

"Yes, my king; he and I are the only survivors of the six children of my parents."

"Is this brother older or younger than you?"

"I was the oldest, he the youngest, of all, and the joy of my father's old age."

"Have you ever noticed any likeness between him and one of my relatives?"

"Yes, your Majesty; Gaumata is so like your brother Bartia that they always call him in the priests' school, at Rhagæ, where he now is, 'The Prince.'"

"Was he lately at Babylon?"

"Yes, during the new-year's feast."

"Not since?"

"No."

"Then you lie, for Gaumata was here last night. You do well to tremble."

"To you, to whom all belongs, my life belongs as well; yet I, the high-priest, swear by the most mighty god,

whom I have served these thirty years, that I know nothing of my brother's presence at Babylon last night."

"Your face seems to confirm your words."

"You know that yesterday I never left your side."

"Yes, I know."

The doors opened a second time to admit the trembling Mandane. The high-priest looked at her with astonishment, as if to ask what she were doing here. It did not escape the observant eyes of the king that the maid stood in some relation to Oropastes, and he asked, without paying any attention to the terrified girl, who lay at his feet,—

"Do you know this woman?"

"Yes, my sovereign; she obtained, through my influence, the high position of chief servant to the—may Auramazda forgive her!—to the Egyptian princess."

"How came it that you, a priest, took so much interest in this woman?"

"Her parents died in the same plague that carried off my brothers. Her father was a respectable priest and a friend of our house, and so we adopted the girl, remembering the doctrine, 'If thou givest nothing to the righteous man, his widow and orphans, then wilt thou be cast out by the patient earth into stinging nettles, torturing pains, and the place of terror.' So I had her educated with my brother, until the time when he was sent to the school of the priests."

The king exchanged an expressive look with Phanes, and asked, "Why did you not keep with you this maiden, who seems to be so fair?"

"When she received her ear-rings it seemed fitting that she should leave my priestly house and try to establish herself."

"Has your brother seen her since she has grown up?"

"Yes; when Gaumata visited me I allowed him to be as much with Mandane as though she were his sister; when I noticed, in the course of time, that youthful passion was taking the place of childish friendship, my determination to send the maiden away was strengthened."

"We know enough," said the king, as he waved the

high-priest back. And then, looking down at the prostrate girl, he said, "Arise!"

Mandane stood up, trembling and tottering; her rosy face was as pale as ashes, and her lips blue.

"Tell me what you know about last night."

The knees of the terrified girl shook so that she could scarcely stand, and she was dumb with fright.

"My patience is short!" exclaimed the king, fiercely.

Mandane still struggled in vain to utter a word; and Phanes asked the king, in a low voice, to let him question her,—kindness might unclothe the lips that terror had sealed. Cambyses consented, and the result confirmed the Athenian's words; for when Phanes assured her of the good will of all present towards her, and bade her not fear, the unhappy maid, bursting into tears, told all she knew, not concealing that Boges had managed the meeting, and ending with these words: "I know very well that I have forfeited my life, and that I am the wickedest and most ungrateful being on the face of the earth; but all this trouble would never have happened if Oropastes had only allowed his brother to marry me." With this she burst into fresh sobbing; while the grave listeners, even the king himself, could not keep from smiling.

This turn of affairs was her salvation. Cambyses would scarcely have so unbent himself if the woman, with the fine instinct of her sex, had not known how, at the right moment, to attack his weak side, by dwelling on the delight that Nitetis had in the king's gifts. "A thousand times," she said, "my mistress would kiss all the things that they brought to her from thee, O king; often she would press to her lips the flowers that thou hadst plucked for her with thine own hands. And when they began to fade, she took each flower, spread it out carefully, laid it between woollen cloths, and put her heavy gold ointment-box upon them, that she might dry them all, and keep them as a memento of thy kindness."

When she noticed that the expression of her stern judge softened at these words, she took fresh courage and went on to ascribe to her mistress loving expressions that the latter had never in fact used, and she asserted

that she had heard Nitetis a hundred times utter in her sleep the word "Cambyzes" with inexpressible tenderness. The king looked down at the girl without anger, but with infinite contempt, and, pushing her off with his foot, he exclaimed,—

"Out of my sight! blood such as yours would defile the executioner's axe. Out of my sight!"

Mandane did not require urging to leave the room; the contemptuous dismissal was music to her ears. At full speed she ran through the wide courts of the palace, crying out wildly to the people who were thronging in the street, "I am free, I am free!"

Scarcely had she gone when Datis, the "eye of the king," entered again, to report that his search for the chief of the eunuchs had been unsuccessful; that the latter had disappeared miraculously from the hanging-gardens, and that orders had been issued to follow him up and bring him back alive or dead. The king burst into fresh fury at this, and threatened the officer of police, who had been wise enough not to say anything to Cambyzes about the disturbances among the people, with the severest penalty if the fugitive were not captured before the next day. He had hardly finished before an usher brought in a eunuch whom the mother of the king had sent with the request for an interview with her son. Cambyzes granted the petition at once, and, turning to Phanes, offered him his hand to kiss,—an honor seldom bestowed, and then only to the guests of the royal table.

"All the captives are now to be set at liberty! Go to your sons, ye anxious fathers, and assure them of my grace and favor. Each of them shall have a satrapy as compensation for this night of undeserved imprisonment. To you, my Hellenic friend, I owe the most; that I may pay it and insure your stay at my court, the chief treasurer shall give you a hundred talents."

"I can never use so large a sum," answered Phanes.

"Then misuse it," returned the king. "I will see you again at the banquet." And with these words he left the hall with his suite.

During all this time there was great mourning in the

house of the queen-mother. Cassandane believed, after she had seen the letter to Bartia, in the entire guilt of Nitetis, though she still held her son innocent. Whom could she now trust, when she found her whom she supposed the very impersonation of all womanly virtues an adulteress in wish, if not in fact, and the noblest youths of the kingdom lying perjurers? Nitetis was to her worse than dead, and Darius, Gyges, Araspes, Bartia, Cræsus, to all of whom she was bound by some tie, the same as dead; nor dared she give way to her sorrow, for hers was the duty of curbing the outbursts of her son's despair.

Atossa acted like a madwoman when she heard of the death-sentence; the self-control that she had learned from the daughter of Amasis left her entirely, and her old violence broke out with redoubled fury. Nitetis, her only friend; Bartia, the brother of her love; Darius, towards whom she now saw she had another feeling besides that of gratitude merely; Cræsus, who was to her as a father; all, all that was dear, she was to lose forever. She tore her clothes and her hair, she called Cambyses a monster, and every one that believed in the guilt of her friends a fool and a madman. Then she would burst into tears and pray humbly to the gods, and beseech her mother to go with her to the hanging-gardens and hear the defence Nitetis would make, till Cassandane was at last compelled to send her to her room. Atossa obeyed, but, instead of sleeping, sat at the window of her chamber that commanded the hanging-garden, and looked towards the house where her friend, her sister, was awaiting, in loneliness and sorrow, a shameful death.

As she gazed, her expression changed, for all her attention became riveted upon a small, dark object which came flying towards her from the Egyptian's dwelling; and, starting up with a cry of joy and clapping her hands, she exclaimed, "Oh, see, see, the bird of Homai! the bird of good fortune! Oh, all will be well!"

The same bird of Paradise whose sight had brought such comfort to the heart of Nitetis gave Atossa, too, new hope. First looking to see if any person was near, and finding no one but an old gardener, she jumped from the

window, and, breaking off a rose and a branch of cypress, hurried with them to the slave, who was shaking his head reprovingly; and, laying her flowers in his sunburnt hand, she asked him,—

“Are you fond of me, Sabaces?”

“Oh, my mistress!” answered the old man, as he kissed the hem of her garment.

“I believe you, Sabaces, and I will prove how much I trust my true old friend. Hide these flowers, and hasten quickly to the king’s palace; pretend that you are bringing fruit for the table; go to where my poor brother Bartia and Darius, the son of Hystaspes, are imprisoned; and manage to get these flowers to them, with my greeting,—do not forget that, with my greeting.”

“But the guards will not let me in.”

“Take this ring; they will not refuse the poor fellows a few flowers.”

“Well, I will try.”

“I knew that you loved me, good Sabaces; now make haste, and come back soon.”

As the old man hurried off, she looked thoughtfully after him, and murmured to herself, “Now they will know that I loved them till their death; the rose says, ‘I love you;’ the cypress says, ‘I am true.’”

After an hour, the old man came back, bringing with him Bartia’s favorite ring, and from Darius an Indian handkerchief dipped in blood. Atossa said softly, as she sat under a spreading plantain-tree, “Bartia’s ring tells me he is thinking of me, and Darius sends me word that he is ready to shed his heart’s blood for me.”

A few hours later a messenger from Cræsus announced to the royal ladies that the innocence of Bartia and his friends was proved, and Nitetis the same as acquitted. Cassandane sent word at once to Nitetis to come to her; and Atossa ran impetuously to meet her friend, exclaiming all the while, “They are innocent! they are saved! we shall have them now forever!” And when she met the litter of Nitetis, and saw the princess lying in it, pale as death, she threw herself, sobbing, upon her sister’s neck, and never ceased her caresses and kisses till she

saw that Nitetis, who had risen from her carriage, was tottering so that she could scarcely walk. The daughter of Amasis was carried fainting into the queen's apartments; when she opened her eyes, her head was resting on Cassandane's breast; on her forehead she felt Atossa's warm kisses, and standing by her couch she saw Cambyses.

"She is innocent, by Mithra! she cannot but be innocent!" exclaimed the king, kneeling at her feet, while a Persian physician rubbed her temples with a sweet-smelling ointment. Nebenchari, murmuring some form of incantation, felt her pulse, and, shaking his head doubtfully, gave her some medicine from the box he carried in his hand. She recovered entire consciousness, and, raising herself up painfully, she turned to Cambyses.

"How could you!—how could you! my king?"

There was sorrow, but no anger, in the words; Cambyses only answered, "Forgive me."

Cassandane, acknowledging by a look the self-abasement of her son, said, "I too need forgiveness, my daughter."

"I never doubted you!" exclaimed Atossa, proudly.

"It was the letter to Bartia that shook my faith," added the queen-mother, apologetically.

"And yet it was all so simple and natural," answered Nitetis. "Here, my mother, take this letter from Egypt,—Cræsus will translate it for you,—it will explain everything. I have been imprudent, perhaps; your mother will tell you all, my king; but pray do not laugh at my poor sick sister. When an Egyptian loves, she loves forever. How terrible it is!—the end is at hand. Ah, those horrible last hours! When Boges read me the sentence of death, I seized the poison—oh, my heart, my heart!"

Nebenchari hurried to her as she sank back, and said, as he gave another medicine, "Yes; she has taken poison; she must die, even should this antidote keep her alive for a few days. Bring me some milk, and fetch my large chest of drugs. Call the slaves to carry her back, for above all things she needs rest."

Atossa hurried into the next room, and Cambyses asked the physician without looking at him,—

"Is there no way of saving her?"

"The poison she has taken is certain death."

When he heard these words, the king thrust back the Egyptian, exclaiming, "She shall live. I command it. Ho! eunuchs, summon all the physicians in Babylon, all the priests and Mobeds. She shall live. Do you hear? She shall live! I command it,—I, the king!"

At this moment Nitetis opened her eyes, as if she would obey her lord's command; her face was turned towards the window, and there, on the cypress-tree, sat the bird of Paradise, with the golden chain on his foot. The sick girl looked first at her lover, who was kissing her hand with hot lips, and murmured, "This bliss at last," then she pointed with her other hand to the bird, exclaiming, "Look! look! the bird of Ra! the Phoenix!" and closed her eyes again as the fever seized her.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE ALLIANCE.

PREXASPES, the king's ambassador, one of the highest of the court officials, had brought Gaumata, the lover of Mandane, whose likeness to Bartia was nothing less than astounding, to Babylon, sick and wounded as he was. Here the latter was awaiting in captivity his judicial sentence, while Boges, his seducer, in spite of all the efforts of the police, was nowhere to be found. The great crowd in the streets had facilitated the flight which the trap-door in the hanging-gardens had made possible. The wealth which was found in his house was enormous; whole chests of gold and jewels, of which his position enabled him to get possession, were taken back to the royal treasury whence they had come. But Cambyses would have paid this amount ten times over if he could but have seized the traitor.

Two days after the acquittal of the accused, all the women of the palace, to the despair of Phædime, were ordered to Susa, excepting Atossa, Cassandane, and Nitetis, who was hovering between life and death. Several of the most distinguished of the eunuchs were dismissed from their high places, that the caste might atone for the crime of its fugitive chief. Oropastes, who had already entered upon his duties as viceroy, and who had cleared himself entirely from any participation in his brother's guilt, filled their places exclusively with Magi.

The demonstration which the people had made in Bartia's favor was not told to the king until the assemblies had entirely broken up. In spite of his anxious care for Nitetis, which took up almost his whole attention, he had a detailed report made him of these unlawful acts, and ordered the ringleaders to be severely punished. He fancied he could gather from what had happened that Bartia was suing for popular favor; and he would perhaps have made known his displeasure to his brother in some practical way if his better feelings had not told him that it was not for him to forgive Bartia, but for Bartia to forgive him. Still, he could as little put aside the thought that Bartia was guilty of causing all the wretched events of the last few days, even if innocently, as he could the wish to remove him out of the way; so that he gave a willing assent to the young man's wish to go at once to Naucratis.

After an affectionate leave-taking with his mother and sister, Bartia, two days after his acquittal, started on his way. Gyges, Zopyrus, and an endless number of followers, bearing gifts from Cambyses to Sappho, accompanied him. Darius, detained by his passion for Atossa, stayed at home; the day too, when he was to wed, by his father's command, Artystone, the daughter of Gobryas, was not far off.

Bartia parted with a heavy heart from his friend, whom he advised to be as prudent as possible in regard to Atossa. Cassandane knew now of the secret of the lovers, and promised to mediate with the king. If any one could raise his eyes to the daughter of Cyrus, that person was Darius, who was closely allied by marriage

with the reigning family, who belonged, as did also Cambyses, to the Pasargadæ, and whose ancestors were a younger line of the ruling dynasty. His father, too, was the head of the imperial nobility, and governed as such the province of Persia, the mother-country, to which this vast empire, as well as its ruler, owed its origin. In case of the failure of the descendants of Cyrus, the heir of Hystaspes had the nearest right to the Persian throne. Therefore, putting aside his personal qualities, Darius could sue for Atossa on quite equal terms. Still, he dared not ask for the king's consent; for the latter, in the gloomy state of mind that he had been in since the late events, would most probably have given a refusal, and such an answer would conclude the matter forever. Therefore Bartia had to go away without being able to feel his mind at rest in regard to the future of the two who were so dear to him.

Cresus promised to act as mediator; and not long before Bartia's departure he took an opportunity of presenting him to Phanes. The young man met the Athenian, of whom he had heard much good from Sappho, with great friendliness, and soon won the regard of the experienced man of the world, who gave him many useful hints, as well as a letter of introduction to Theopompus the Milesian, at Naucratis, and concluded by asking him for a more private interview. When Bartia came back with the Athenian to his friends, he seemed grave and thoughtful, but soon forgot his cares as he laughed with his companions over their parting cups.

Before he mounted his horse the next day, Nebenchari sent to ask for an audience. When the oculist was admitted, he requested Bartia to take a voluminous letter to Amasis. It contained a detailed description of the illness of Nitetis, and ended as follows:—

“Therefore this wretched victim of your ambition will soon die an early death from the poison which she took as a refuge from despair. As a sponge washes the drawing from a slate, so does the will of the gods destroy the happiness of human life. Banished from his home and his property, your servant Nebenchari pines away; and the daughter of an Egyptian king perishes by her

own hand. Her corpse, after the manner of the Persians, will be torn in pieces by the dogs and vultures. Woe to them who have robbed the innocent one of her happiness here, and of her peace and rest hereafter!"

Bartia promised the dark, sullen man to take this writing, whose contents he knew not, and, surrounded by a shouting crowd, heaped up the pile of stones in front of the gates of the city, which, according to the Persian superstition, assured him a happy journey, and left Babylon.

In the mean while Nebenchari hurried back to his post at the bedside of the Egyptian princess. At the brazen door of the wall which connected the garden of the harem with the courts of the large palace, he was met by an old man clad in white. Scarcely had he looked at him when, staggering back, he stared at the stranger as if the latter had been a ghost. Then, greeting him with a friendly smile, he hastened up and held out his hand with a heartiness none of the Persians would have believed possible:—

"Can I credit my eyes, old Hib? you here in Persia? I should have expected the heavens to fall sooner than the joy of seeing you on the Euphrates. But tell me, in the name of Osiris, what has moved the old Ibis to leave his warm nest on the Nile and take this long journey to the East?"

The old man, who during these words had been bowing low with his arms hanging down, now looked up at the physician with an expression of indescribable happiness, and, patting Nebenchari on the breast with his trembling hand, sank upon his right knee, and, pressing one hand upon his heart, raised up the other:—

"I thank thee, great Isis, thou who protectest the traveller, that thou hast granted me to find my master. My child, you little know what I have gone through for your sake. I thought to see you wasted away like a starved prisoner at the stone-quarries, miserable and wretched; and, behold, you are as handsome and stately as ever, and in perfect health. If you had been in the place of your old Hib, you would have been worried and tormented to death long ago."

"I believe it, my old friend. I too left home at sore compulsion and with a bleeding heart. This outside world is the dominion of Seth; the kindly gods live only in Egypt, on the holy, blessed Nile."

"Oh, as far as blessing is concerned——" growled the old man.

"You frighten me, Hib. What has happened, then, that——"

"Happened? Oh, pleasant things enough. You'll hear them in good time. Do you think I would have left my home and my little grandchildren in my eightieth year, and taken to travelling, like one of those Grecian or Phœnician gad-about, among the god-forsaken outsiders, whom Neith destroy, if I could have stayed at home?"

"But tell."

"In time! in time! You must first take me to your own house, which I will never leave while I am in this land of Typhon." Hib uttered this with such intense disgust that Nebenchari could not help smiling as he asked,—

"Have they treated you, then, so very badly?"

"Plague and Chamsin," railed the old man, "all these Persians are the most worthless brood of Typhon on the earth. I only wonder that they are not all born red-haired and leprous. Oh, my child, I have been two days in this hell; and I shall have to stay I don't know how long among these despisers of the gods. They told me it would be impossible to speak to you, for you could not leave the couch of Nitetis. Poor little thing! I said this marrying with a foreigner could bring no good. Well, it will serve Amasis right if his children do bring him sorrow. He has deserved it on your account, if for nothing else."

"Shame on you, Hib!"

"Well, well: I must out with it. I hate this lowborn adventurer, who, when he was a boy, used to shake the nuts off your father's trees, and tear the plates from the doors. I know him well, this good-for-naught. It is a downright shame that by such men——"

"Gently, gently, old fellow. We are not all cut out

of the same cloth; and if Amasis was no better off than you when he was a boy, it is your fault that you now, as an old man, are so far below him."

"My grandfather was a temple-servant, my father also, and so of course I am one."

"True enough, for that is the law of the castes, according to which Amasis ought to be nothing better now than a petty captain."

"Not every one has such an elastic conscience as this mushroom monarch."

"Just the same dissatisfied old scold as ever. For shame, Hib! as long as I can remember, and that is full fifty years, I never heard you open your mouth without complaining and abusing. I used to be the butt of your ill humor when I was a boy, and now it is the king."

"Yes, and rightly enough, too. If you but knew seven months ago——"

"I cannot listen to you now: at the rising of the Pleiades I will send a slave who will take you to my house; till then remain in your present quarters, for I must go at once to my patient."

"Oh, you must, must you? Well, go, and let Hib die outright, as I shall do if I have to be another hour with these men."

"What is it that you want?"

"To stay in your apartments till we go away."

"Have they, then, treated you so very shamefully?"

"Oh, do not talk of it! They make me eat out of the same dish with them, and cut my bread with their knife. A pestilent Persian, who had been a long time in Egypt, and who travelled with me, told them of all the things that we consider unclean. When I wanted to scrape my skin, they took away my knife; an impudent wench, before I could prevent her, kissed me on the forehead. Oh, there is nothing to laugh at! It will take me a month to purify myself. When I took my emetic, they all made fun of me; and that was not all; a cursed scullion in my very presence beat a sacred cat almost to death. An ointment-rubber, who found out that I was your servant, made that scoundrelly Bubares ask me whether I understood how to cure the eyes. I sup-

pose I said yes; for, you know, in sixty years one cannot help picking up something. Then the rascal told a piteous tale, which Bubares interpreted to me, of a terrible weakness he had in his eyes, and when I asked the nature of the complaint, he said that he could not see anything in the dark."

"You ought to have told him that the only remedy for that was to light a lamp."

"I hate the rascals! I could not survive an hour among them."

Nebenchari smiled as he answered, "You have conducted yourself in a most extraordinary fashion towards these strangers, and have, very naturally, provoked their ridicule. The Persians, as a rule, are very civil, courteous people. Just try to act more sensibly, and see if you cannot hold out a little longer until I send for you."

"I thought so! Everything is upside down. Osiris is dead and Seth is lord of all."

"Hush! hush! and when the Pleiades rise, Nebununf, my Ethiopian slave, will await you at this place."

"Nebununf, the old scoundrel, whom I detest?"

"The same."

"He's had the sense at all events to keep his place. Some people can't say that of themselves. Instead of keeping to their own proper business, they meddle with diseases they have no concern with, and tell their faithful old servant——"

"To hold his tongue and wait patiently for evening."

These last words, spoken with entire seriousness, did not fail to make the intended impression. The old slave, bowing low, said to his master, as he went away, "I have come here under the protection of the former commander, Phanes. He is very anxious to speak with you."

"That is his affair; let him seek me out."

"You keep yourself shut up all day with this patient of yours, whose eyes are as well as——"

"Hib!"

"Oh, for all I care, she may have a cataract over both of them. Can Phanes come with me to-night?"

"I wished to speak with you alone."

"And I with you; but this Hellene seems to be in hot

haste, and in fact knows pretty much all I have to tell you."

"Have you been tattling?"

"No, not exactly that; but——"

"I always thought you could keep a secret."

"And so I can; but this Greek appeared to know nearly all that I did, and the rest——"

"Well?"

"The rest he wheedled out of me, I don't know how. If I did not wear this amulet against the evil eye, I would think——"

"I know the Athenian, and can therefore forgive you; yes, he may come with you this evening. The sun is high! Time presses; tell me briefly what has happened."

"I think this evening——"

"No, I must have a general idea of what has occurred before I see the Athenian. Be brief."

"You have been robbed."

"Nothing more?"

"If you call that nothing——"

"Answer! nothing more?"

"No."

"Then, farewell."

"But, Nebenchari——"

The oculist, without hearing more, had quickly shut behind him the gate which opened into the women's house, and disappeared.

When the Pleiades had risen, Nebenchari was sitting in a sumptuous room assigned to his use, on the east side of the palace, not far from Cassandane's dwelling. The friendly geniality with which he had greeted his old servant had again given place to the gravity which, among the vivacious Persians, had got him the reputation of moroseness. He was a genuine Egyptian, a true child of that priestly caste, whose members, even in their own country, were wont in public to bear themselves with cold and solemn dignity, while among their chosen companions and in their own homes they would shake off this forced reserve, and abandon themselves to the wildest merriment.

Nebenchari, having received Phanes with distant po-

liteness, although he had known him at Sais, ordered Hib to leave them to themselves.

"I come to you," began the Athenian, in Egyptian, of which he was a perfect master, "because I have much that is important to say to you——"

"Of all of which I am already informed," was the curt reply.

"You must allow me to doubt that," returned Phanes, with an incredulous smile.

"You have been driven from Egypt, and have been bitterly persecuted and wronged by Psamtic, the heir-apparent, and now you have come to Persia to make Cambyses the tool of your vengeance against my country."

"You are wrong; I have nothing against your country, though I have none the less an account to settle with the house of Amasis."

"You know in Egypt the king and the state are one."

"I have rather observed that the priests and the state are one."

"Then you are better informed than I. I have always been taught to believe the Egyptian kings autocratic monarchs."

"And so they are, when they have sense enough to free themselves from priestly influence. Even Amasis now bows down before the priesthood."

"Strange news, indeed."

"Not new to you."

"You think so?"

"I do, and all the more, that he,—I pray you heed me,—that he succeeded once in bending their will to his."

"I hear but seldom from my home, and therefore cannot follow you."

"I believe you; for if you could, and did not clinch your fist, you would be no better than a beaten hound turning to lick the hand that strikes him."

The physician turned pale, and said, "I know I have been injured by Amasis, and I pray you to mark that my revenge is too sweet a dish to be shared with a stranger."

"Bravely said; yet my revenge may be compared to a vineyard whose fruit is too full for me to gather in alone."

"And you are here to seek a vintager?"

"Even so; I cannot give up the hope of having you share my pleasing labor."

"You are wrong: my work is over; the gods took the task from me. Amasis has been punished sorely enough for banishing me from my home, my friends, my scholars, and sending me to this unclean land."

"By his blindness?"

"Perhaps."

"You do not know that your colleague, Petammon, has removed the film that covered the king's eyes, and so restored his sight."

The Egyptian started; but, quickly recovering his self-possession, answered, "The gods have punished him in his children."

"How? Psamtic is on excellent terms with his father in his present mood. Tachot is ill indeed, but on that very account she prays and sacrifices all the more industriously with him; and as far as Nitetis is concerned, her probable death will cause him no heartache, as you know as well as I."

"Again I cannot follow you."

"Not while you believe that I think her the daughter of Amasis."

The Egyptian started a second time. Phanes continued without seeming to notice his emotion:—

"I am better informed than you think. Nitetis is the daughter of Hophra, the dethroned predecessor of your king. Amasis brought her up as his own child, first, that he might make your countrymen believe that the fallen Pharaoh had died without issue; secondly, that he might prevent Nitetis from making her rightful claim to the Egyptian throne, for, as you know, on the Nile women are under no disability in this respect."

"These are mere conjectures."

"Which I can make good by most positive proofs. Among the papers which your old servant Hib brought with him are the letters of a certain Sonnophre, your father."

"If this be so, they are my property, which I have certainly no intention of making public; and you will

look in vain through Persia for a man able to decipher my father's writing."

"Pardon me if I again call your attention to certain errors. In the first place, the box containing them is in my possession, and will be given to you, as I respect lawful rights, but not until its contents have served my purpose; secondly, thanks to the miraculous interposition of the gods, there is a man in Babylon who can read every cipher known to the Egyptian priests: his name,—Onuphis."

The physician turned pale a third time, and asked,—

"Are you quite sure the man is yet alive?"

"I spoke with him yesterday; he was, as you know, high-priest at Heliopolis, and was initiated into all your mysteries. My wise countryman, Pythagoras of Samos, came to Egypt, and, after going through some of your ceremonies, was allowed to share in the instruction in the priests' school at Heliopolis; by his great powers of mind, he gained the love of Onuphis, was taught by him all your hidden knowledge, and thus became the means of making it useful to the world. I myself, and my excellent friend Rhodope, are proud to call ourselves his scholars. When your colleagues learned that Onuphis had betrayed his trust, they resolved to make away with him. He was to be murdered by a poison made from the kernels of cherries. The condemned man got wind of this, and hastened to the house of Rhodope, of whom Pythagoras had told him much, where he found a safe refuge. Here he became acquainted with Antimenidas, the brother of the poet Alcæus of Lesbos, who, during the many years that he had been banished by Pittacus, the sagacious ruler of Mitylene, had lived at Babylon, and had served as a soldier under Nebuchadnezzar, the then reigning king. This Antimenidas gave Onuphis recommendations to the Chaldeans. The latter went to the Euphrates and settled at Babylon, where, as he had left home a penniless man, he was compelled to look out for a livelihood. This he obtained by means of the letter of introduction which Antimenidas had given him. Once among the mightiest of Egypt, he spends his time in helping with his thorough knowledge the Chaldeans in making

their calculations. Onuphis is nearly eighty years old, but his mind is as clear and vigorous as ever. When I saw him yesterday and asked him for assistance, he assented with kindling eyes. Your father was one of his judges, but he bears you no malice, and bade me give you his greeting."

Nebenchari, who had been gazing thoughtfully on the ground while Phanes was speaking, now raised his eyes, and looked keenly at the Athenian.

"Where are my papers?"

"In the hands of Onuphis, who is searching for the documents I require."

"So I might have supposed. Be so kind as to tell me what the chest is like that Hib thought good to bring to Persia."

"It is a small box of ebony."

Nebenchari gave a sigh of relief, as he answered, "It contains nothing but some notes of my father's."

"It may perhaps answer my purpose. Do you know that I stand high in Cambyses' favor?"

"So much the better for you. I can assure you that the writings which could have served you are left behind in Egypt."

"Those in a sycamore box painted in various colors?"

"How can you know aught about it?"

"Because,—mark me well, Nebenchari,—because I say to you,—I swear not, for oaths are forbidden by my master Pythagoras,—I tell you that this chest, with its entire contents, was burnt, by the king's command, in the grove of the temple of Neith, at Sais."

These words, which Phanes uttered slowly, emphasizing every syllable, fell upon the Egyptian like so many thunderbolts. The coolness and self-possession that he had preserved up to this point gave way to an indescribable emotion. His cheeks glowed, and his eyes flashed; but in a moment all was over, and an icy calmness obtained the mastery over his excitement; his flushed face grew pale, and with quivering lip he said quietly,—

"That you may make me your accomplice, you are trying to incite me against my friends. I know you

Greeks; tricky and cunning, you stop at no deception to gain your end."

"You judge me and my countrymen after the true Egyptian manner; that is, you think everything foreign as bad as possible. This time, however, you are mistaken in your suspicions. Send for old Hib, and let him confirm what you do not believe from me."

Nebenchari's brow grew dark as Hib, at his command, entered the room.

"Come nearer."

The old man obeyed the order, shrugging his shoulders.

"Have you been bribed by this man? Yes, or no? I demand the truth, for it is a question of the weal or woe of my whole future. If you have fallen into the toils of this master of deceit, I will forgive you, for I owe you much, as an old and faithful servant. Tell me the truth, I conjure you, in the name of your Osirian fathers."

The yellow face of the old man grew a sallow gray. For several minutes, sobbing and catching his breath, he could not utter a word. At last, forcing back the tears, he burst out, half angrily and half whimpering,—

"I knew it! He has been bewitched and corrupted in this vile land. What a man is capable of himself, he is quick to suspect in others. Look as savagely at me as you like,—what is it to me? What further have I to fear when they take an old man, who has served the same family faithfully and honorably for sixty years, for a rascal, a scoundrel, a traitor, and, if you like it, for a murderer, too?"

Phanes, easily touched, clapped the old man on the shoulder, and said, turning to the doctor, "Hib is a faithful fellow. Call me villain, if he has had an obolus from me."

The Egyptian did not need the assurance of Phanes to be convinced of his servant's innocence; he had known Hib so long and well that he could read his face like an open book.

"I have not reproached you," said Nebenchari, kindly. "Why get so angry at a simple question?"

"Do you think to please me by your suspicion?"

"No, no. But tell me exactly what has happened while I have been away."

"Fine goings-on! To think of it, is as bitter in my mouth as wormwood."

"You told me I had been robbed."

"And how! Never was a person so pillaged. If it had been by rascals of the thieves' caste, there would have been some consolation; for, in the first place, I could have got back the best part of our property, and, in the second, we should have been no worse off than many of our neighbors."

"Keep to the point; my time is short."

"Oh, yes, old Hib can do nothing here in Persia to suit you. Well, be it so. You are master, and I am man. You command, and I must obey; I'll not forget that. It was just at the time when the great Persian embassy came to Sais to fetch Nitetis, and when they were gaping at everything, like children at a show, that this infamous robbery took place. I was sitting, just before sunset, in the Fly-turret, and playing with my grandchild, my Baner's eldest boy; and a fine, stout fellow it is too, and wonderfully smart and strong for his age—the little rogue was telling me how his father, as Egyptian husbands do when their wives leave the children too much alone, had hidden his mother's shoes; and I laughed to kill myself; it was I that played Baner this trick; because she never will let the children be with me; she says I spoil them. All at once there came a tremendous knocking at the house-door: I thought there must be a fire,—I let the boy slip out of my lap and ran down-stairs, with my long legs taking three steps at a time, and, pushing back the bolt, the door flew open, and a crowd of temple-servants and police-officers rushed in—fifteen at least of them—before I could ask what they wanted. Pichi, the impudent servant of the temple, thrust me back, fastened the door on the inside, and ordered his men to bind me if I did not obey him. I was raging, of course; I can't be otherwise when anything happens to put me out; then,—by our god Thoth, the patron of science, I am telling you the truth, master,—this cock-sparrow had my hands fastened, ordered me to shut my

mouth, and told me that he was authorized by the high-priest to give me four-and-twenty stripes if I did not comply fully with all his demands; then he showed me Neithotep's ring, and of course I had to obey the rascal's order, whether I wanted to or not; it was nothing less than to hand over all the manuscripts that you had left in your house. But old Hib was not such a fool as to let himself be caught, though some people think he can be bribed and is the son of an ass.

"What did I do? I pretended that I was perfectly overcome at the sight of the ring, and asked Pichi, as politely as I could, to loose my hands, and told him I wanted to go and fetch the keys. They set my hands free. I ran up-stairs, five steps at a time, pulled open the door of your chamber, thrust in my grandchild, who was standing in front of it, and bolted the door. Thanks to my long legs, I was so far ahead of the others that I had time to put the little black chest, that you told me to be particularly careful of, into the boy's arms, and to lift him out on the balcony that runs around the house on the side towards the court, and to tell him to go hide the box in the dove-cot. Then I opened the door as if nothing had happened, pretended to Pichi that the child had had a knife in his hand, and that I was so frightened that I ran up-stairs headlong, and had put the boy out in the air to punish him. The scurvy fellow swallowed the story whole, and made me take him all through the house. First they found the large sycamore chest, with the papers you especially intrusted to me, then the papyrus-rolls on your writing-tables, and, one after another, every bit of writing in the house. These they stuck higgledy-piggledy into the big box, which they carried down-stairs; but the black coffer was lying snugly hidden away in the dove-cot. My grandson is the smartest boy in all Sais.

"That very evening I went to my son-in law, who, you know, is servant in the temple of Neith, and asked him to make every exertion to find out the fate of the stolen papers. The good fellow is grateful to you for the generous dowry that you gave my Baner, and came to tell me, three days afterwards, that he had been

present when the box, with all the rolls in it, had been burnt up. I fell sick from sheer vexation ; but that didn't prevent me from sending in a complaint to the judges. Because they were priests, of course they dismissed my petition. I next addressed the king in your name ; but I was put off with the threat of being dealt with as a traitor to the state if I ever spoke of the papers : and I set too much value on my tongue to take any further steps. The very ground was hot under my feet, and I could not stay in Egypt. I must speak with you, and tell you how you had been treated, and implore you, as you are more powerful than your poor servant, to avenge yourself ; and, last of all, hand over to you the little black chest, or that might perhaps be seized by those blackguards. Therefore, with a heavy heart, I left my home and my grandchild, to go, old as I am, into this dominion of Typhon. Oh, the little rogue was so cunning ! when I kissed him for good-by, he said, ' Stay here, grandfather ; if the strangers defile you, I shall never be able to kiss you again.' Baner sends a hearty greeting to you ; and my son-in-law told me to say to you that Psamtis, the heir-apparent, and Petammon, the oculist, your old rival, are alone responsible for the whole affair.

"As I did not want to trust myself to the sea of Typhon, I travelled with a caravan of Arabian merchants to Tadmor, the Phœnician settlement in the desert, with its forest of palms, and from there I went with some Sidonian traders to Carchemis, on the Euphrates, where the highway from Phœnicia to Babylon meets that from Sardis thither. I was sitting, tired out, in the grove in front of the station, when a foreigner, travelling with the royal post-horses, came up. I recognized him at once as the former commander of the Hellenic soldiers."

"And I," broke in Phanes, "as quickly recognized you as the tallest and the crossdest man I ever met. I have laughed at you hundreds of times when you scolded the boys running after you, as you followed your master through the streets with the medicine-chests under your arms. Yes, I remember the jest that the king once made, in his droll way, at your expense. When you two went by one day, he said, ' Whenever I see that pair, I cannot

help thinking how much the old fellow is like a sullen owl, chased by chattering birds, and that Nebenchari has got a termagant, who rewards him for all the eyes he has cured by scratching out his own.'"

"An infamous jest!" exclaimed the old man, bursting into fresh curses.

The physician had listened in thoughtful silence to the narrative of his servant. From time to time his color came and went, but when he heard that his papers, the slow fruit of wakeful nights, and days of toil, had been burned, wilfully and maliciously destroyed at the order of his colleague and of his king, he clinched his fists, and his body trembled as with a chill.

His emotion did not escape the Athenian; he was well versed in human nature, and knew that a word of ridicule wounds an ambitious soul more than the greatest of real injuries. It was for this reason that he had repeated the scornful jest that King Amasis had, indeed, permitted himself to utter; nor did Phanes reckon without his host, for he observed how at this Nebenchari crushed in his hand a rose that lay on the table.

Suppressing a smile, the Athenian continued: "Now, to finish the story of the travelling adventures of the worthy Hib, I invited him to share my carriage. At first he refused to sit on the same cushion with a beggarly foreigner, but finally yielded, and, at the last station, had an opportunity of showing to the world, through his treatment of the brother of Oropastes, those bits of medical knowledge that he had picked up from you and your father, and at last when we arrived safely at Babylon, I procured for him a place in the king's palace, because he could not get at you, on account of your being so engrossed by the poor princess. The rest you know."

Nebenchari nodded assent, and ordered Hib by a gesture to leave the room. The old fellow went out grumbling and scolding. When the door was shut behind him, the physician, approaching the soldier, said, "I fear, Greek, in spite of all, we cannot be allies."

"Why not?"

"Because your vengeance is too petty to be linked with mine!"

"Have no fear there," answered Phanes. "Let me call you my ally!"

"Upon one condition."

"Name it."

"I must witness with my own eyes the consummation of our vengeance."

"You would go with the army that Cambyses will lead against Egypt?"

"Yes, and when our foes are grovelling in shame and ruin, I will say to them, 'See, cowards, see how a poor exiled physician avenges his wrongs.' Oh, my books, my books! they were to me as home, and wife, and children, and they are gone,—all, all gone. From them, men for years to come would have learned how to bring light to the blind in their dark prison-house, and to save to the dim eyes the divine and precious gift of sight that was fading away; now that those books are lost, I have lived for naught; with the writings the wretches have destroyed me, the father of them. Oh, my books, my books!"

And the unhappy physician burst into agonizing sobs. Phanes, taking Nebenchari's right hand in his own, said, "The Egyptians have struck you a cruel blow, my friend, but they have done worse to me. Thieves have broken into your garner, and scattered your hard-earned harvest to the winds, but murderous incendiaries have laid my home in ashes. Do you know, man, what it is they have done? Had they hunted me down, I could have seen their right, for by the sentence of Egypt's law, I was guilty of death. As far as I am concerned, I could have forgiven them, for between me and Amasis it was as friend to friend. The wretch knew that, and yet permitted the atrocity. Oh, my brain reels when I think of it! Like wolves they forced their way into the house of a defenceless woman and stole my children, a boy and a girl, the pride, the joy, the comfort of my homeless life. What, think you, did they do with them? The girl they kept in captivity, as a hostage, to prevent my betraying Egypt to the foreigners; but my boy, a gracious creature, all beauty and goodness, my only son, that hell-kite Psamtic wantonly murdered,—Amasis, for

ought I know, consenting. My heart, crushed as it is, beats joyously at thoughts of vengeance, pitiless, remorseless vengeance,—the vengeance of a father for his murdered child.”

“Yes, we are allies,” was all Nebenchari could answer.

“Now to make sure of Cambyses,” added the Greek, eagerly.

“I will give sight to Cassandane.”

“Can you do that?”

“The operation which restored his eyes to Amasis was my discovery. Petammon stole it from my papers.”

“Why have you not done so before?”

“Why should I throw pearls before swine?”

Phanes could not repress a shudder at these cold-blooded words, but recovering himself quickly, added, “You will secure the king’s favor: the ambassadors of the Massagetæ have gone home to-day; they have concluded a peace, and——”

At that moment the door burst open, and one of Cassandane’s eunuchs rushed breathless into the room, exclaiming, “My mistress, Nitetis, is dying! quick, quick! follow me!”

CHAPTER XXIV.

NITETIS, THE DAUGHTER OF A KING.

THE sun was trying to make its way through the thick curtains which hung before the windows of the house in the hanging-gardens, as Nebenchari still sat at the bedside of the Egyptian princess. At intervals he felt her pulse, rubbed her forehead and breast with odorous ointments, and looked dreamily into vacancy. The dying girl, who had just recovered from a convulsion, was lying in a deep sleep. Six Persian doctors stood at the foot of the couch, murmuring incantations, while Nebenchari sat by the patient’s head and dictated prescriptions to the Asiatics, who could not but acknowledge his sur-

passing medical skill. As often as the Egyptian felt the pulse of Nitetis, he shrugged his shoulders,—a gesture his Persian colleagues to a man did not fail to imitate.

From time to time the curtain at the door opened, and a lovely young face looked in, whose blue eyes would turn an anxious, questioning gaze upon the physician, but only to be dismissed with that same ominous shrug of the shoulders; twice had the anxious Atossa, scarcely touching the heavy Milesian carpet, glided to the bed of her sick friend to kiss the fair forehead on which stood the cold sweat of death, and each time she had been summarily sent back to the next room by the Egyptian sage. Here, Cassandane was lying awaiting the result, while Cambyses, when Nitetis fell asleep at sunrise, left the sick-chamber to mount his horse, and, accompanied by Phanes, Prexaspes, Otanes, Darius, and a host of courtiers, to scour the park in a furious chase, always the most effectual way to control and subdue his wild passions.

When Nebenchari heard the sound of the clattering hoofs in the distance, he shuddered: it seemed to his fancy as though the king were going into Egypt with a host of warriors, extending farther than the eye could reach, and was in the act of hurling torches of destruction into the cities and temples of the eternal land, levelling with mighty blows the gigantic Pyramids. In the ruins of the desolated cities lay women and children; from the tombs, the mummies of the dead cried out with wailing voices, and all, priests, warriors, women, children, the dead and the dying together, shrieked his own name and cursed him as the betrayer of his country. A cold chill passed through his heart, which beat more feverishly than the pulses of his dying patient.

Again the curtain was pushed back. As Atossa came softly in, and laid her hand on his shoulder, he started and awoke; for three days and nights he had sat by this couch, almost without a single interval of rest, and well, therefore, might he fall asleep.

Atossa glided back to her mother. Deep silence reigned in the sultry air of the sick-chamber. The Egyptian thought over his dream, said to himself that he was

on the point of becoming a traitor and a felon, and again all that he had seen in his vision passed before him; although another picture took the place of these hideous spectres. Nebenchari saw the figure of Amasis, who had exiled and mocked at him, loaded down with chains, and Psamtis, also, and the priests who had destroyed his works. His lips moved slightly, but he tried in vain to utter the pitiless words which, in his mind, he cried out to his supplicating foes; and the stern man brushed a tear from his eye. Before his soul there passed in mute succession the long nights in which, pen in hand, he had sat under the dim light of the lamp, and written down his thoughts and experiences, in the finest hieroglyphics, carefully drawing each character. For many diseases of the eye that the holy books of Thoth had pronounced incurable, he had found a remedy, but he knew well that his colleagues would have brought the charge of irreverent presumption against him, had he undertaken to amend the sacred writings. For the title of his book, therefore, he had chosen these words: "Some new writings of the great Thoth concerning the diseases of the eye, discovered by Nebenchari, the oculist." He had intended his work to go after his death to the library of Thebes, that his experiences might be of use to his successors; simple recognition was all he wished for himself, the glory should be for his caste. There stood now his ancient rival Petammon, after having stolen from him the discovery of the cure for cataract, close by Psamtis's side in the grove of Neith, and stirred the fire. The red glow lighted up their devilish faces, and their mocking laughter, hissing on revenge, rose with the flames to heaven; yonder the high-priest was handing to Amasis the books of the father of Nebenchari. Scorn and malice flashed from the king's eyes, and triumphant joy from the features of Neithotep.

So fast asleep was the physician that one of the Persians had to call his attention to the fact that his patient was awake. He felt her pulse, and asked,—

"Have you slept well, my mistress?"

"I do not know," was the scarcely audible answer. "It seemed to me as I slumbered that I saw and heard

all that happened in the room. I was so weak that I could not tell sleep from waking. Has not Atossa been here several times?"

"Yes."

"And Cambyses waited in the chamber with Cassandane till the sun rose, and then went out in the open air, mounted his horse Reksch, and rode into the park?"

"How did you know that?"

"I saw it."

Nebenchari looked anxiously into her eyes as she continued, "And they have led out several dogs into the courtyard behind the house."

"The king wishes to forget his troubles in the chase."

"Oh, no; it is not that. Oropastes has taught me that dogs are brought to every dying Persian, that the Dive of death may pass into them."

"But you are still alive, and——"

"I know I am dying. Have I not seen you and the other physicians shrug your shoulders despairingly, as you looked at me? I know I have but a few hours to live? The poison is sure."

"You must not talk; it will do you harm."

"I must, Nebenchari: I have something to ask of you before I die."

"I am your servant."

"No, Nebenchari, you shall be my friend, my priest. You are not angry with me any longer, because I prayed to the Persian gods? Our Hathor is the god whom I have ever worshipped above all the rest. Yes, you forgive me. Promise not to let me be torn in pieces by dogs and vultures. Oh, it is too horrible to think of! Embalm my body and adorn it with amulets, will you not?"

"If the king permits it."

"He will, he will! Cambyses will not refuse my last request."

"My poor skill is all yours."

"I thank you; but I have one thing more to ask."

"Be brief; my Persian colleagues are beckoning to me to bid you be silent."

"Cannot you send them away for a few minutes?"

"I will try."

Nebenchari approached the Magi, and in a moment after they left the room. He pretended that he was about to employ a powerful charm, at which no third person could be present, and that he wished to administer a new and secret antidote.

When they were alone, Nitetis gave a sigh of relief, and said, "Give me the priest's blessing for my long journey to the world beyond, and prepare me to go to Osiris."

Nebenchari knelt at her couch, and sang, in a low voice, some hymns, in which Nitetis joined devoutly. The physician represented Osiris, the lord of the dead, and she, the soul pleading before him.

When these ceremonies were over, the dying maiden seemed to breathe more easily. Nebenchari looked kindly down at the young girl. He felt that he had saved this soul, and committed it to the safe-keeping of the gods of his own country, and that he had given peace to the last dread hours of the dying princess: during these few moments, occupied in a work of compassion and humanity, all his bitter feelings passed from his mind; but when the thought returned to him that all this misery was due to Amasis, darkness again fell upon him.

Nitetis, who had lain silent for a long time, turned to him, with a gentle smile. "Shall I not find favor with the judges of the dead?"

"I trust and believe so."

"Perhaps I shall find Tachot by the throne of Osiris, and my father will——"

"Your father and your mother are awaiting you. Bless, in this your last hour on earth, bless those who begot you, and curse those who robbed your parents of their life and kingdom."

"I do not understand."

"Curse those, girl, who robbed your parents of their life and their kingdom!" exclaimed the sage a second time, standing erect and breathing heavily, as he looked down at the dying maiden. "Curse the villains, girl, for such a curse will gain more favor for you with the judges of the dead than a thousand good works." The physician eagerly grasped the hand of his mistress as he spoke.

Nitetis looked sorrowfully up at the angry man, as she gasped out, "I curse——," in blind obedience to his command.

"Curse those who robbed your parents of life and of kingdom."

"Those who robbed my parents of life and of kingdom. Oh,—my heart!—my heart!"

She sank back utterly exhausted, and Nebenchari, bending over her, kissed her forehead before the royal physicians entered the room again, muttering to himself, as he turned away,—

"She dies my ally. The gods will heed the curse of dying innocence. Not as my own avenger merely, but as avenger of King Hophra, now I go to Egypt."

A few hours after, Nitetis again opened her eyes. Her cold hand was resting in those of Cassandane; at her feet knelt Atossa; at the head of the bed was Cræsus, supporting in his aged arms the king, who tottered so that he could not stand alone. The dying girl, more glorious in her beauty than ever before, looked around at her sorrowing friends, her eyes bright with the radiance of another world. Cambyses stooped and kissed her cold lips,—the first and last kiss of their love. The tears started to her eyes, and with Cambyses' name half uttered, she sank back into Atossa's arms,—dead.

We pass over the next few hours; it would be tedious to tell in detail how, at a sign from the chief of the Persian physicians, all left the room except Nebenchari and Cræsus; how dogs were brought into the chamber of death, that they might turn their sagacious heads towards the corpse and frighten away the Druchs Naçus; and how Cassandane, Atossa, and all the servants went to another house, that they might not be made unclean; and how all the lights were extinguished, that the pure flame might not be defiled by the spirits of death; how incantations and exorcisms were said; and what endless ablutions those who approached the dead body had to undergo.

That evening Cambyses was seized with an epileptic attack. Two days later he accorded Nebenchari permis-

sion to embalm the corpse after the Egyptian fashion. He gave himself over to the wildest grief, tore the flesh from his arms, rent his clothing, and spread ashes on his head and over his couch: in all of which his courtiers were bound to imitate him. The guards marched with tattered pennons and to the sound of muffled drums. The cymbals and kettle-drums of the "Immortals" were covered with crape. The horses of the dead princess, together with all those used at the court, were painted blue and had their tails cut off. Every one was required to wear dark-brown mourning rent in pieces. The Magi were obliged to pray three days and three nights, without interruption, for the dead, as the soul in the third night would be awaiting at the bridge *Chuivat* the sentence of the judges. The king, also *Cassandane* and *Atossa*, did not fail to take part in the purifications, and offered thirty prayers as for a nearest relative; while *Nebenchari*, in a house over against one of the city gates, began to embalm the dead according to the rules of the art, and in the most costly way.

For nine days *Cambyses* continued in a state of frenzy, now frantic with grief, and now lying in a heavy stupor. He allowed no one, not even his own relatives or the high-priest, to approach him. On the tenth day, however, he sent for the chief of the seven judges, and ordered them to make the punishment of *Gaumata* as light as possible. *Nitētis* had prayed on her death-bed that the young man might be spared. An hour later they brought the king the sentence for his approval. It ran as follows:—

"Victory to the king! As *Cambyses*, the Eye of the world and the Sun of Justice, in his mercy, which is as wide as the heaven and as exhaustless as the sea, hath commanded us to weigh and punish the crime of *Gaumata*, the son of the Magus, not with the sternness of a judge, but with the indulgence of a mother: therefore we, the seven judges of the realm, have resolved to spare his forfeit life. But because, through the folly of this youth, the highest and best of this kingdom have been plunged into great calamities, and as it is to be feared that he may again misuse, to the injury of the pure and just, the

countenance and shape that the gods in their grace have made so like unto those of Bartia, the royal son of Cyrus, therefore we have determined so to mutilate the head of the condemned that it may always be easy to distinguish the basest from the noblest. Be it ordered, then, with the consent and at the command of the king, that both his ears be cut from Gaumata, to the honor of the just, and the eternal shame of the impure."

Cambyses confirmed the sentence, which was executed the same day. Oropastes dared not intercede for his brother, though this decision gave a keener pang to his ambitious soul than a sentence of death would have done. He feared that he himself would suffer dishonor through his brother; he ordered the latter to leave Babylon as quickly as possible, and retire to a country-house on Mount Aracadris.

During the last few days a poorly-dressed woman, whose face was hidden by a thick veil, stood day and night at the great entrance of the palace, and neither the threats of the guards nor the gibes of the servants could drive her from her post. None of the petty officials who passed could escape her questionings, which related always either to Nitetis or Gaumata. When a garrulous lamplighter informed her with jeers of the sentence which had been pronounced upon the brother of Oropastes, she became like a madwoman, wildly kissing the garment of her astonished interlocutor, who, supposing her indeed a lunatic, offered her an alms. Still lingering about the place, she lived upon whatever food a compassionate servitor might chance to give her.

When Gaumata, three days later, in a closed "barmamaxa," with his head bound up, came out of the gate of the palace, she hastened after the carriage and called out so persistently that the driver stopped to ask what she wanted: putting back her veil, she showed the young priest her lovely, blushing face. Gaumata uttered an exclamation of surprise when he recognized her, and asked, recovering himself, "What would you have of me, Mandane?"

The unhappy girl raised her hands, imploringly, as she cried, "Oh, do not leave me, Gaumata! Take me with

you. I forgive you all the unhappiness you have brought upon me and my mistress. I love you, and I will take care of you and serve you like a slave."

For a moment the young man hesitated, and was about to open the door to his mistress, when he heard the sound of hoofs. He looked round and saw a carriage full of Magi, going to prayers in the palace, among whom he recognized some of his former friends at the priests' school. His sense of shame was aroused; he feared to be seen by those whom, as brother of the high-priest, he had often treated superciliously in old times; he threw the maiden a purse of gold, and ordered his servant to start: the mules dashed away at full speed, and were soon far out of sight of poor Mandane, who had spurned the purse with her foot, and was now standing motionless in grief and bewilderment.

On the twelfth day after the death of Nitetis, Cambyses again went out to the chase with all his court, among whom Phanes won the highest praise for his skill and courage. In return for the congratulations heaped upon him, the Athenian, with ready tact, but in entire sincerity, told the Persians how well he liked their country and themselves, contrasting their easy tolerance and quickness in appreciating and adopting what was good in others, with the narrowness of the Jew and the Egyptian.

"Yet," he said, in conclusion, "I must confess that Egypt is rightly looked upon as the richest of all countries, especially in its architecture. But he who possesses this kingdom of yours need not envy even the gods their treasures. It would be mere child's play to conquer that beautiful Egypt. I know all about it, and I would back your 'Immortals' against the whole warrior-caste that Amasis has under him. Who can tell what may happen? Perhaps we may all take flight to the Nile one day. I think your good swords have been rusting too long."

A stormy outburst of applause followed the well-timed words of the Greek. Cambyses, who had heard the noise, rode up to inquire its cause. Phanes answered,

quickly, that the Achæmenides had been shouting with delight at the possibility of a coming war.

"What war?" asked the king, his face brightening into a smile.

"We were only speaking in a general way of such a possibility," was Phanes' prompt reply. Then, drawing his horse up close to that of the king, and in the ringing, expressive tones he knew so well how to use, he said, as he looked into Cambyses' eyes,—

"O my king, I was not, it is true, born your subject in this fair land, and it is but a little while that I have known the mightiest of all monarchs, yet I cannot put away the thought, over-bold, perhaps, that my heart was made for your friendship. It is not your great kindness to me that has called forth this feeling, for I stand in no need of your bounty; I am one of the richest of my people, and have no son, no heir to whom to leave my fortune. Once there was a boy whom I could call my own, a fair, lovely child. But I will not speak to you of that. I——Does my presumption anger you?"

"How should it?" answered the king, pleased more even than surprised at the strange way in which he was addressed.

"Until to-day your grief was too sacred to be disturbed, but now the time is come to snatch you from your sorrow and fill your soul with new life. Yet you must hear what will offend you much."

"Nothing can pain me now."

"My words will not only wound, but also anger you."

"You awaken my curiosity."

"You have been shamefully deceived, you and that lovely princess now no more."

Cambyses looked at the Athenian with a keen, searching gaze, as the latter continued:—

"King Amasis of Egypt has allowed himself to make presumptuous sport with the mightiest ruler of the earth. That beautiful maiden was not his daughter, though she thought herself the child of Amasis. She——"

"Impossible!"

"So it would seem, and yet I speak the truth. Amasis has woven a tissue of lies in which he has entangled

you and all the world. Nitetis, the fairest being ever born of woman, was indeed a prince's child, but not the child of the usurper Amasis. No, the lawful king, the fallen Egyptian monarch Hophra, was her father. Frown, my king, as you well may: it is a gross outrage to be so deceived by an ally and friend."

Cambyses put spurs to his horse, and called to Phanes, who had remained silent for several minutes, that his words might produce their effect,—

"Proceed. I must—I will know all."

"The dethroned Hophra," answered Phanes, "had lived twenty years in an easy captivity at Sais, when his wife, who had already given birth to three children, all dead in infancy, became pregnant again. Hophra, in his delight, went to the temple of Pacht, an Egyptian goddess, to whose special favor is ascribed the gift of child-bearing, and was about to offer a sacrifice in thanksgiving, when a former noble of his court, Patarbemis by name,—whom he, in a fit of rage, had once ordered to be mutilated,—rushed in, with a company of slaves, and butchered him on the spot. Amasis ordered the widow to be brought to the palace, and assigned her a room next that of his wife, Ladice, who was also expecting her own confinement. The widow of Hophra gave birth to a girl, and died immediately afterwards. Ladice, two days later, brought forth a female child. But here we are, in the palace-yard. If you will permit me, I will have the report of the man-midwife who attended both the women read to you,—by a strange accident it fell into my hands. Onuphis, the former high-priest at Heliopolis, is living at Babylon, and can read all kinds of hieroglyphic writing. Nebenchari the oculist will refuse, as a matter of course, to aid in revealing a secret that brings destruction to his own country."

"I will expect you in an hour with Onuphis. Cræsus, Nebenchari, and all the Achæmenides who were in Egypt, shall also be present. Before I act, I will have certainty. Your testimony alone is not enough, as I know from Amasis himself that you with reason bear a grudge against his house."

At the appointed time all were present. The former

high-priest, Onuphis, was a man of eighty years, whose withered head would have seemed a mere skull if two large, gray, intelligent eyes had not looked forth from it. He sat, on account of his lameness, in an arm-chair before the king, with a voluminous roll of papyrus in his emaciated hands. His robe of spotless white, the priestly color, was covered with rents and patches. Once he might have been tall and slender; but now, so bowed down was he by age, privation, and sorrow, that his figure seemed puny, and his head over-large for his dwarfish body. Near this strange man stood Nebenchari, who was arranging the cushions for his countryman, whom he honored not only as the high-priest versed in the sacred mysteries, but also as the hoary sage. On the left of the chair stood Phanes, with Cræsus, Darius, and Prexaspes.

The king sat on the throne. His face was dark and stern, as he broke the prevailing silence by saying,—

“The noble Greek yonder, whom I am much disposed to look upon as my friend, has made a strange communication to me. He asserts that Amasis of Egypt has outrageously deceived me, and that my dead wife is the daughter of Hophra.”

A murmur of astonishment followed these words.

“This old man is here to confirm the story.”

Onuphis bowed in assent.

“Now, I must first ask you, Prexaspes, as my ambassador: Was Nitetis given into your charge as the daughter of Amasis, in so many words?”

“In so many words. Nebenchari, as you know, extolled to Cassandane the other twin-daughter, Tachot, as the fairer of the two princesses; but Amasis insisted upon sending Nitetis to Persia. I supposed that he wanted to lay you under greater obligations by intrusting to you his most precious jewel, and that he refused your offer to Tachot because her sister surpassed her in every respect. In his letter, you will remember, he described your wife as the child most beautiful and most dear to him of all.”

“Yes, I remember.”

“And certainly Nitetis was the more striking of the

two," said Cræsus. "Yet Tachot always seemed to me to be the favorite child."

"Why, certainly," added Darius. "You must all remember how Amasis teased Bartia at the feast, and said, 'Do not look too deep into Tachot's eyes, for were you a god you should not take her to Persia;' and how Psamtic grew angry at these indiscreet words of the king, and said, 'Father, remember Phanes.'"

"Phanes?"

"Yes, your Majesty," answered the Athenian. "Amasis once, when drunk, revealed his secret to me, and therefore Psamtic warned him not to betray himself a second time."

"Tell me what he said on that first occasion you speak of."

"When I came back from Cyprus, covered with glory, Amasis, much to the disgust of his countrymen, embraced me affectionately, and took every opportunity of distinguishing me, because I had subdued a rich province. The more drunk he was, the more profuse were his acknowledgments. When, at last, Psamtic and I accompanied him to his apartments one night, as we were passing the rooms of his daughters, he stopped, and said, 'There are the girls, fast asleep. If you will only rid you of your wife, Athenian, I will give you Nitetis. You would be a son-in-law after my own heart. There is something amiss with the child, Phanes. She is no daughter of mine.' At that, Psamtic put his hand upon his father's mouth, and dismissed me roughly to my quarters. I did not forget what I heard, and conjectured what I now know of a certainty. I pray your Majesty to command this old man to translate the diary of the man-midwife, Sonnophre."

Cambyzes gave the order, and Onuphis read, in a clear voice that one would never have expected to hear issue from that shattered frame:—

"The fifth day of the month Thoth I was summoned to the king. I expected this; for the queen was near her time. With my assistance she was soon delivered of a delicate girl. When the nurse had taken charge of the baby, Amasis led me behind a curtain that hung before

one of the doors of the room. There lay another infant; I recognized it as that of the wife of Hophra, who had died under my hands on the third day of Thoth. The king pointed to the child, and said, 'That is a fatherless and motherless orphan, and the law says that one should take care of such: therefore Ladice and I have resolved to bring up this poor little creature as our own daughter; and all that remains to be done is to keep the whole affair a secret from the world. So I command you to speak of this affair to no one, and to say that the queen gave birth to twins. If you carry this out properly, you shall have five thousand rings of gold, and every year as long as you live a fifth of that sum.' I bowed in silence, and ordered all to leave the room, summoning them again after a few moments, and announcing that Ladice was delivered of another girl. The true child of Amasis was named Tachot, the pretended one, Nitetis."

At these words Cambyses sprang from his seat, and strode up and down through the room as Onuphis continued:—

"The sixth day of the month Thoth.—When I had lain down this morning to rest for a little while after my labors of the night, a servant of the king's brought me the stipulated sum, together with a letter. In it I was asked to procure a dead child, which might be buried with great pomp as the deceased daughter of Hophra. After much trouble I obtained it an hour ago from a poor girl, who had secretly given it birth in the house of an old woman who lived near the cemetery. She could not be prevailed upon to give up the dead body of the child of her shame and sorrow; but, when I promised that the infant should be embalmed and buried in the best possible way, she yielded. We carried the corpse in my large medicine-chest into the chamber of Hophra's wife. For this service I had to employ my son Nebenchari instead of my servant Hib. The child of the poor maiden was interred with all splendor, as I can tell her now. At this moment Nebenchari has been summoned to the king."

At the second mention of this name, Cambyses stopped, and asked,—

"Is our oculist Nebenchari the one mentioned in this manuscript?"

"Nebenchari," returned Phanes, "is the son of that Sonnophre who changed the two children."

The oculist looked gloomily upon the ground; Cambyses took the roll from Onuphis, scrutinized the characters for a moment, and then, shaking his head despairingly, handed the manuscript to the physician.

"Look at these letters, and tell me if your father wrote them."

Nebenchari fell upon his knees, and lifted up his hands for mercy.

"Did your father draw those characters, I ask."

"I do not know whether—indeed——"

"I will have the truth,—yes or no?"

"Yes, your Majesty, but——"

"Arise, and be assured of my favor; it becomes a subject to be true to his king; forget not that *I* am your sovereign for the present. Cassandane sends me word that by a skilful operation you are to give her back her sight to-morrow. Are you not attempting too much?"

"My art is sure, your Majesty."

"Did you know of this deception?"

"Yes, your Majesty."

"And yet allowed me to continue in my error?"

"Amasis made me swear to keep the secret, and an oath——"

"Is holy? yes. Gobryas, see that both these Egyptians have a portion from my table. You seem to stand in need of better fare than you have, old man."

"I need naught but air to breathe, a crumb of bread, and a little water, a clean garment also, that I may not be displeasing to the gods, and, last of all, a chamber of my own, that I may be in no one's way. Never was I richer than to-day."

"How so?"

"I am about to bestow a kingdom."

"You speak in riddles."

"I have shown that your dead wife is the child of Hophra. According to our laws of inheritance, if there

is no son, the daughter succeeds to the throne; if the latter die childless, her husband takes her place. Amasis is a usurper as long as Hophra and his issue have any hereditary rights. Psamtis is destitute of every claim upon the sceptre while there lives a brother, a son, a daughter, or a son-in-law of Hophra. Therefore I hail in your Majesty the future king of my beautiful country."

Cambyses smiled with self-satisfaction as Onuphis continued: "I have read the fate of Psamtis in the stars; the crown of Egypt is decreed to you."

"The stars shall be confirmed; but now, munificent old man, tell me, I command, the wish of your heart."

"Let me follow your army to Egypt. I long to close my eyes on the banks of the holy river."

"So be it, then. Leave me now, my friends, and take care to be present at the feast to-night. We will hold a council of war over our wine. A campaign against Egypt is more glorious than a war against the Massagetæ."

"Victory to the king!" they shouted, as Cambyses left the room to await his valets, who were to take off his mourning garments and array him, for the first time since the death of Nitetis, in royal splendor.

When the king had gone, Cræsus and Phanes went out into the palace-garden, where the old Lydian tried to persuade the Athenian to forego his terrible vengeance; while the latter took advantage of the opportunity to tell his friend what were the wrongs that urged him on. Cræsus, when he had heard all, made no effort to turn the injured man from his purpose, and, to change the conversation, asked whether Bartia would not run some risk in going to Egypt.

"I think not," answered Phanes. "Still I have advised him to go disguised and under a false name."

"Did he seem willing to do so?"

"Yes."

"Would it not be better to send a messenger after him to tell him of the war?"

"Yes. I will ask the king to do so. Come, let us go; there are the wagons that bring the dishes from the

kitchen to the royal feast. How many men does the king really give a dinner to every day?"

"About fifteen thousand."

"Then may the Persians thank their gods indeed that their rulers dine but once a day."

CHAPTER XXV.

SARDIS.

SIX weeks after these events, a small company of horsemen were riding along the highway which led to Sardis. The two leaders, who were dressed in the costume of the Persian court, were urging on their tired horses, that they might pass over as quickly as possible the short distance that lay between them and the city.

The road at this point ran through a small forest of birch-trees, their trunks festooned with vines loaded with grapes. At a turn of the highway, as it descended towards the plain, the horsemen halted to look at the prospect which lay before them. Directly in their path, in the celebrated valley of the Hermus, was the capital of the former Lydian kingdom, the residence of Cræsus, golden Sardis. The citadel, a precipitous, black cliff, on whose summit rose white marble buildings, landmarks to all the country round, and along whose triple walls King Meles many centuries before had carried a lion, that so the place might be made impregnable forever, towered over the reed-thatched roofs of the innumerable houses of the town. To the south the rock was less steep, and was covered with dwellings. To the north, on the golden Pactolus, was the palace of Cræsus. Through the market-place ran the tawny river, looking like a barren spot in a blooming meadow, and poured itself through a narrow defile, where it washed the foot of the great temple of Cybele. To the east were large gardens, in which lay, like a shining mirror, the blue

Gygean lake; over whose surface glided gaudily-painted pleasure-boats, followed by snow-white swans.

About a quarter of a league from the lake rose many artificial hills, among which three were especially conspicuous for their size and height.

"What do those strange mounds signify?" asked Darius, the leader of the squadron, of his companion, the ambassador Prexaspes.

"They are the graves of former kings of Lydia," was the answer. "The largest of them—not the one in the middle—that is to the memory of Panthea and Abradat—but the one to the left—is the monument of Alyattes, the father of Cræsus. The merchants, the mechanics, and the prostitutes of Sardis erected it. On the five pillars which stand on the summit you can read how much each class contributed. The harlots were the most active. The grandfather of Gyges must have been especially friendly to them."

"His grandson has not followed in his footsteps."

"No, and what makes it all the stranger is that Cræsus, when he was young, was no woman-hater, and the Lydians, in general, are very wanton. Yonder, in the valley of the Pactolus, not far from the gold-diggings, stands the temple of the goddess of Sardis, whom they call Cybele or Ma. You can see the white walls shining through the trees of her sacred grove: there the young people of the town have assignations in honor of the goddess, as they pretend."

"Just as at Babylon during the feast of Mylitta."

"Yes, and the custom prevails along the coasts of Cyprus, as I learned on my way home from Egypt. But, if my eyes don't deceive me, there are Zopyrus and Gyges, riding at the head of a company of soldiers. They must have expected us."

"Yes, it is they."

"See, that madcap Zopyrus has broken a palm-branch and is hailing us."

"Here, fellows, break off a couple of boughs from that bush for us. Now let the red pomegranate answer the palm."

A few minutes later, Darius and Prexaspes were ex-

changing greetings with their friends; and the whole party rode through the park, into which, as the sun went down, a continuous stream of people flowed through the city-gates, all bent upon taking their pleasure in the evening air. Lydian soldiers, with elaborately-ornamented helmets, and Persian warriors, with cylindrical tiaras, were pursuing the painted harlots, whose heads crowned with leaves distinguished them from all others. Nurses were leading children to the lake to feed the swans. Under a plantain-tree sat an old blind minstrel, singing melancholy songs to his circle of hearers, accompanying himself upon a magadis, or twenty-stringed Lydian lute. Young men were engaged in different games, and the girls were amusing themselves by playing ball.

The Persians paid little heed to the bright and motley picture, for their thoughts were all occupied with anxiety for Bartia, who was just recovering from a severe illness.

The satrap Oroetes, a stately man in gorgeous dress, met them at the brazen portal of the palace. His small, black eyes looked out keen and bright from under his bushy eyebrows, and seemed ever watchful and suspicious. His satrapy was one of the richest and most powerful in the whole kingdom, and his court was hardly surpassed in wealth and splendor by that of Cambyses himself. His wives and servants were not quite so numerous as those of the king,—though no one looking at the crowd of body-guards, slaves, eunuchs, and gaudily-dressed functionaries would have seen any inferiority. His official residence, of regal splendor, was, when the home of Crœsus, the most magnificent palace of the world; but after the conquest of Sardis the Persian king had sent nearly all the treasures and works of art to Pasargadæ. Since that time, however, the Lydians had brought forth from concealment much hidden wealth, and under the wise rule of Cyrus and Cambyses, during a long period of peace, had amassed, through persistent industry, enough to make Sardis, as it was of old, the richest city of Asia Minor, and therefore of the world. Darius and Prexaspes were especially struck by the artistically-carved marble, such as was not

to be found as yet either at Babylon or Susa. There cedar and burnt tiles were its poor substitutes.

In the great hall they found Bartia, lying pale and weak on cushions spread upon the floor. After a dinner at the satrap's table, the friends met again in the invalid's room, where they could talk in private of the many things that had an especial interest for them.

When they had stretched themselves out comfortably, Darius said, turning to Bartia,—

“How did it happen that you were seized by this illness?”

“I will tell you in a very few words,” answered the prince, “as I want to save all my strength for the journey. As you know, we left Babylon in excellent condition, and reached Germa, a small town on the Sangarius, without any interruption; here, tired out by the ride, and burnt to a cinder by the sun of Chordât, we determined, in spite of all that Gyges could say, to bathe in the river. Two hours later, near Ipsus, I fainted as I tried to mount my horse; and Zopyrus, setting off at once hither, soon returned with a carriage and a physician. I was at once taken to Sardis, where I have been ever since. To my two friends I owe my life, for they have nursed me patiently through it all. To your kindness, also,” he added, turning to Oroetes, “I am deeply indebted, as I have been the cause of much annoyance to you.”

“How was that?” asked Darius.

“Polycrates of Samos, whose name we heard so often in Egypt, keeps the most celebrated physician in Greece at his court. Now, Oroetes sent for Democedes when I was ill, and held out great inducements to him if he would come at once. Some Samian pirates seized the messenger and took the letter to their king,—who opened it, and sent back word that the physician was his servant, and that if Oroetes wanted him, he must apply to the writer himself. Our noble friend humiliated himself for my sake, and submitted to the arrogance of Polycrates by asking him to send the doctor to Sardis.”

“And Polycrates?” demanded Prexaspes.

“Sent the man at once. He has, as you see, entirely

restored me to health, and left here only a few days ago, loaded with gifts."

"I can see very well," broke in Zopyrus, "why the Samian is not anxious to part with him. I tell you, Darius, that there is not another like him in the world. Handsome as Minutscher, clever as Piran Wisa, strong as Rustem, and skilful in healing as the holy Soma. You should have seen him throw the metal plate he calls a discus! I am not particularly weak; but he had me on the ground before I'd wrestled two minutes with him. And such stories as he tells!—you never heard any so funny in your life."

"We know his counterpart," said Darius, amused at his friend's enthusiasm,—*"Phanes the Athenian, who proved our innocence."*

Oroetes did not seem much pleased with these eulogiums on the Greeks, and proceeded to show how unreliable and troublesome they were. During his diatribe Zopyrus had gone to the window, and, carelessly interrupting the speaker, said,—

"The stars are already high in the heavens, and Bartia ought to go to sleep: so make haste with your news of home, Darius."

The young man began at once to relate all that had happened since Bartia's departure; how Nitetis had died, and how in a council of war the king had resolved to attack Egypt, and what an eloquent speech Phanes had made at the time, and how rejoiced all the Persians were at the prospect of a fight.

"In the month Farvedin," he continued, "our army is to be on the borders of Egypt; for in that of Musdad the Nile overflows, which might interfere with the passage of the infantry. The Greek, Phanes, is now on his way to the Arabs, to propose an alliance to them; the children of the desert are to supply our army with water and with guides. He is also to gain over to us the rich Cyprus, which he once conquered for Amasis. It was by his intercession that the king of this island obtained the crown, and most probably Phanes will have no trouble in securing him. The Athenian manages everything, and sees his way to his purpose as clearly as if, like the sun,

he could overlook the whole earth; and, by the way, he showed us the other day a picture of the world drawn on a copper disk."

"Yes," added Oroetes; "I have just such a one myself. A Milesian named Hecatæus, who was always travelling about, made it, and gave it to me as a sort of universal passport."

"What won't these Greeks invent!" exclaimed Zopyrus, protesting that he could not see how the thing was possible.

"I will show you mine to-morrow," returned the satrap; "and in the mean time let Darius go on with his story."

"Phanes, as I said, went to Arabia, while Prexaspes has come with a double mission: first, to command you, Oroetes, to raise as many soldiers as possible, especially Ionians and Carians, whose leader the Athenian will be; and, secondly, to make an alliance with Polycrates."

"An alliance with the pirate?" demanded Oroetes, with a frowning brow.

"The same," said Prexaspes, as he went on glibly, paying no heed to the other's vexation. "Phanes has received the promise of so many excellent ships from the king, that the result of my mission will, I doubt not, be most favorable."

"The Phœnician, Syrian, and Ionian men-of-war are certainly enough," returned the satrap, "to overcome the navy of Egypt."

"Very true; but suppose Polycrates should take it into his head to attack us, how much chance is there of our holding our own on the sea?—you acknowledge yourself that he has it all his own way in the Ægean."

"But I dislike any dealings with this pirate."

"What we want are strong allies; and the maritime power of Polycrates is great. When we are masters of Egypt by his assistance, there will be time to humble his power. In the mean while I must ask you to put aside your personal feelings, and think only of the success of our enterprise. This I say to you in the king's name, whose signet I bear, and am authorized to show you."

"What does Cambyses demand of me?" inquired the satrap, bowing low at the sight of this emblem of power.

"He commands you to do all in your power to carry out this alliance, and to send your contingent as quickly as possible to the imperial army on the plain of Babylon."

The satrap bowed again, and stalked haughtily out of the room. As the sounds of his footsteps died away, Zopyrus exclaimed,—

"Poor fellow! it's a bitter morsel for his pride to swallow, to have to meet on friendly terms a man who has grossly insulted him."

"You are much too lenient with him, I think. This Oroetes does not please me. No one should ever receive the king's command as he did. Did you see him bite his lip when the ring was shown?"

"Now that he is gone," said Zopyrus, "tell us all the news of home. How are Cassandane and your goddess Atossa? Is Cræsus well? And my amiable consorts? They will have a new companion before long, for I intend to ask Oroetes for his pretty daughter. We have made love with our eyes ever since I have been here. I don't know whether it is Persian or Syrian that we speak, but we have been saying the prettiest things to each other."

Darius laughed, and added, "I have kept my very best news to the last. Listen, Bartia: your mother Cassandane has recovered her sight! Yes, I tell you true. Who healed her? Why, none other than the morose Egyptian oculist, who has grown gloomier, if possible, than ever."

"To finish my story. Cambyses and Phanes are as inseparable as Reksch and Rustem. The Athenian, whom I sometimes see looking very sad when he is alone, makes every effort to cheer the king. He takes part in all our sports, and seems to be interested in looking at the boys when, riding at full speed, they shoot their arrows at earthen pots placed on the sand-hills. When he saw them hurling wooden balls at each other, and cleverly dodging the missiles, he confessed that this was an art he did not understand; but he chal-

lenged all to a trial of skill in wrestling and the throwing of the javelin. He made good his words by leaping from his horse, and—it shames me to say it—stripping soon, to the immense delight of the boys, bringing their wrestling-master down upon the sand; although I am stronger than he, and can lift heavier weights, he is twice as active and skilful; he certainly would have overcome me had he not been tired. One thing, to be sure, is a great advantage to him, and that is his being naked. In the hurling of the javelin, too, he conquered us all, though the king's spear flew farther even than his. Of course I have no explanation to give of this.

“Phanes greatly liked our custom according to which the conquered must kiss the conqueror's hand, and taught us a new sport, that of fighting with the fists. To show us what it was like, he boxed with Bessus, my groom, who is strong enough to hold a horse by his hind legs so that he cannot move; but a blow between the eyes, given by the Athenian, knocked the fellow senseless before they had fought two minutes.

“So much for our Greek friend, who seemed to take with him all our good luck when he left Babylon, for the king then became possessed by all the evil Dives. He did nothing but drink the headiest Syrian wines from morning till night, and, when not intoxicated, he was tormented by fits and headaches. When Otanes proposed to him to send for Phædime and the rest of the seraglio, he gave his poor father-in-law such a savage answer that we all felt sorry for the old noble. A short time after he sent for all the Mobeds and Chaldeans, that they might explain a strange vision that he had had. He dreamed that he was in a barren desert, and, as he was seeking for some oasis, Atossa appeared, who, without noticing him, hastened to a spring which had suddenly, as if by magic, burst forth from the parched earth, and, as he gazed, he saw that, wherever her foot touched the ground, slender pine-trees sprang up, and as they grew changed into cypresses whose tops reached the very heavens. As he was about to speak to his sister, he awoke.

“The Mobeds and Chaldeans declared that the dream meant that Atossa would be lucky in all she undertook,

and with this answer the king was satisfied ; but when the next night he dreamed the same thing again, he threatened them with death if they did not give a new interpretation. The sages considered a long time, and gave as their interpretation that the vision foretold that Atossa would be a queen and the mother of mighty kings. With this explanation Cambyses was well pleased, and, with a strange smile, told us all about it. Cassandane, however, sent for me that very day, and bade me, if I valued my life, to give up every thought of her daughter. As I was leaving the queen's garden, I met Atossa, and we said farewell to each other. The happiness of that moment was worth all the sorrow and disappointment which I have suffered and must ever suffer. Three days after I married Artystone, the daughter of Gobryas. She is beautiful, and would make any other man happy.

"On the morning after my wedding an angarus arrived with the news of Bartia's illness. I at once asked the king for permission to seek you and warn you of the dangers which threatened your life in Egypt, and, in spite of all that my father-in-law could say, bade good-by to my wife, and set off with Prexaspes to meet you, my Bartia, and to accompany you and Zopyrus to Egypt, while Gyges must go with the ambassador to Samos to act as interpreter. Such is the command of the king, who seemed, when I left, much happier than he had been,—partly because he finds distraction in marshalling his troops, and partly because the Chaldeans have assured him that the planet Adar, which belongs to the war-god Chanon, promises victory to Persian arms. But tell me, Bartia, when do you intend to start?"

"To-morrow, if you like. The physicians tell me that a sea-voyage will do me good, and the journey on land from here to Smyrna does not amount to anything."

"And I tell you," broke in Zopyrus, "that your lady-love will make you well sooner than all the doctors in the world."

"We start, then, in three days," said Darius, "for we have many preparations to make. Remember, we are going into what is as good as a hostile country. My

plan is this : Bartia is to be a carpet-merchant from Babylon, I am his brother, and Zopyrus is a trader in the vermilion of Sardis."

"Why cannot we go as soldiers?" demanded Zopyrus. "It is humiliating to be taken for haggling scoundrels. Why would it not do, for instance, to say that we were Lydian warriors, flying from punishment, desirous to enlist in the Egyptian army?"

"There is something in that," said Bartia; "and, besides, it seems to me we look more like soldiers than traders."

"That makes very little difference," suggested Gyges. "Those Grecian merchants and ship-owners put on as many airs as if they owned the universe. Still, I think the suggestion of Zopyrus not a bad one."

"Agreed," said Darius: "Oroetes must supply us with the equipments of Lydian taxiarchs."

"Why not say that of chiliarchs at once?" said Gyges; "remember, our youth may excite suspicion."

"But we cannot go as common soldiers."

"No; but very well as hecatonarchs."

"I care not," said Zopyrus, "so that we do not give ourselves out as traders. In three days, then, we are off; that suits me admirably, for it gives me time to make sure of the satrap's daughter. Good-night, Bartia, and sleep well. What will Sappho say if you come to her with pale cheeks?"

CHAPTER XXVI.

STEPHANION, THE FLOWER-GIRL.

A MORNING in the dog-days had risen hot and clear upon Naucratis. The Nile had already reached its highest point, and now covered the fields and gardens of Egypt. The harbors at the mouth of the river were alive with boats of every kind. Egyptian vessels, manned by Phœnician colonists of the Delta, were bringing delicate tissues

from Malta, metals and stone from Sardinia, and wine and copper from Cyprus. Greek triremes were there, loaded with oil, wine, mastic-branches, and with brass-work and woollen stuffs from Chalcis. Phœnician and Syrian ships, with their motley sails, were discharging their freight of purple cloth, diamonds, spices, glass, carpets, together with cedar-wood from Libanus, for the houses of the Egyptians, whose land could boast no timber, and were waiting to be re-loaded with the treasures of Ethiopia,—gold, ivory, ebony, bright-colored tropical birds, precious stones, and negro slaves, but more especially with the world-renowned Egyptian grain, or with wagons from Memphis, lace from Sais, or fine papyrus. But the days of mere barter were long since past, and the merchants of Naucratis estimated their purchases by carefully-weighed silver, and often with gold itself.

Large warehouses lined the harbor of the Hellenic colony, near which stood booths, into which music and laughter, as well as the blandishments of the painted prostitutes, enticed the idle sailors. Among the slaves, both white and black, carrying heavy bales on their shoulders, crowded a throng of oarsmen and pilots, in a hundred different costumes. Ship-owners, in Grecian or in gaudy Phœnician dress, were giving their orders and delivering their goods to the merchants. The moment any quarrel arose, the Egyptian police-officers, with their long staves, and the Grecian harbor-constables, chosen from among the oldest merchants of the Milesian colony, were on the spot.

The harbor was nearly deserted, for the hour of the opening of the market was near, and the free Greek was seldom willingly absent. Many a curious loiterer, however, remained behind, for there was a beautifully-built Samian craft, called the *Oceia*, being unloaded. On its prow, shaped like the neck of a swan, stood an image of *Hera*. From the ship three young men in the dress of Lydian soldiers descended, followed by several slaves carrying their boxes and bundles.

The most striking of the youthful warriors, in whom the reader will recognize our friends *Darius*, *Bartia*, and *Zopyrus*, turned to one of the harbor-police and asked

him to direct them to the house of Theopompus the Milesian, who was to be their host. Civil and obliging, like all the Greeks, the officer conducted the strangers through the market—which, as the ringing of a bell betokened, had just been opened—to a stately house, the dwelling of the most honored merchant in Naucratis, Theopompus of Miletus.

But their passage through the busy mart was not without its delays. They had to repel the importunity of the fish-wives, butchers, bakers, sellers of sausages, vegetables, and crockery, and, in a word, with all the traders and hucksters thronging the place. But when they drew near the flower-sellers, Zopyrus clapped his hands in delight at their charming looks. Three lovely young creatures, in white, semi-transparent dresses with bright-colored borders, sat on low stools, amid heaps of fresh flowers, from which they were weaving a large wreath of roses, violets, and orange-blossoms. Their heads, each crowned with its garland, looked like the three rosebuds which one of them held out to our friends.

“Buy my roses, my handsome gentlemen,” she exclaimed, in a clear, musical voice, “and put them in the hair of your sweethearts.”

Zopyrus took the flowers, only to give them back to the girl, whose hand he took in his own, and into whose eyes he gazed as he said,—

“I come from a far country, my beautiful child, and I have no mistress in Naucratis; let me, then, put these roses into your own golden hair, and this gold piece into your white hand.”

The girl laughed, as she showed the generous gift to her sisters.

“By Eros, youths like you will not want mistresses long. Are you brothers?”

“No.”

“That is a pity, for we are sisters.”

“You mean, then, we should make three handsome couples?”

“Perhaps I thought that, but I did not say it.”

“And your sisters?”

The girls laughed, and made no opposition to the pro-

posal, as they offered Bartia and Darius their rosebuds. The young men took them, and for each posy gave a gold piece to the girls, who would not let them go till each of them had been crowned with a wreath of laurel.

The rumor of their munificence soon spread through the market, and to reach their destination they had to fight their way through all the flower-maidens of the town. Zopyrus wanted to stay longer talking to the girls, whose beauty brought to their feet all the young men of Naucratis; but Darius urged him on, and Bartia forbade the madcap fellow to delay; so passing the money-changers standing behind their tables, and the citizens who, seated on stone benches, were holding council in the open air, the travellers came at last to the house of Theopompus.

As soon as their guide had struck upon the door with its metal knocker, it was opened by a slave. As the owner of the house was in the market, the servant led them into the andronitis, and asked them to await his master there. As they were looking at the beautiful frescos on the walls and ceilings, and at the polished tiles on the floor, Theopompus, whom we met before at the house of Rhodope, entered the room, followed by several slaves, bringing home the purchases of the morning.

The Milesian met the strangers with graceful politeness, and asked in what way he could serve them. When Bartia had convinced himself that no listener was near, he handed the letter with which he had been intrusted by Phanes to his host. Theopompus testified much astonishment at the clever disguise of the young men, to whose anxious inquiries he answered assuringly that no one would ever detect them, metamorphosed as they were.

Before he had finished speaking, one of his servants entered and called him aside. In a few minutes he came back.

"Oh, ho, my worthy friends! one had better not come to Naucratis to escape discovery. You have been doing business with the flower-girls, it seems, and have paid for your roses, not like Lydian deserters, but like grand seigneurs as you are. All the town knows the beautiful wanton sisters, Stephanion, Chloris, and Irene, who have

ensnared many a young heart with their wreaths, and have charmed many a bright obolus out of the pockets of our prodigal youths. But very few pay as you have done for a friendly word and a few roses. The girls have paraded your gifts all through the market, and thrown your gold pieces in the teeth of their niggardly admirers. The story reached the ears of the Egyptian captain who, since the accession of Psamtic, has superintended the market, that three Lydian soldiers had been scattering gold among the flower-girls. Suspicion was at once aroused, and the toparch has sent an officer here to inquire your rank and station, and what purpose has brought you to Egypt. I told the messenger that you were rich youths from Sardis, who were flying from the vengeance of the satrap. Here comes the officer with a scribe, to make out passports for you that will save you from further annoyance. I have promised a liberal recompense if he will manage to get you admitted into the royal army."

At that moment the scribe, a withered, haggard man, dressed in white, entered the room, made his inquiries, which the young men answered to his satisfaction, and, when Theopompus had entered security for them, proceeded to make out their passports. That of Bartia ran as follows:

"Smerdes, son of Sandon of Sardis, about twenty-two years of age, of a slender, stately figure, with regular features, a straight nose, and high forehead, in the middle of which is a small mole, can remain, since security has been entered for him, in those parts of Egypt where the law permits strangers to reside. In the name of the king.
SACHONS, *Scribe*."

The passes of Zopyrus and Darius were couched in similar terms.

When the officers had left the house, Theopompus rubbed his hands with an air of supreme satisfaction, and said,—

"Now you are perfectly safe, if you will only follow my advice in all things. Take care of these papers as

you would of your eyes, and always keep them by you. Now come to breakfast, and tell me, if the inquiry is not impertinent, whether the report which is circulated through the market to-day is true or not. A trireme from Colophon brings the news that your brother, noble Bartia, is arming against Amasis."

On the evening of that same day, Bartia and Sappho met again for the first time since their long separation. Under the boughs of the acanthus, with the unheeded song of the nightingale filling the air with music, the two lovers sat, silent as the night that hid their joy from all the world.

At last the maiden spoke: "Hour after hour I said, 'He must come.' Every morning when I went into the garden, I looked towards the east, where my heart and my treasure were; and whenever a bird flew down on my right hand, whenever I felt a quivering in my right eyelid, whenever I searched through my coffer and found the laurel-wreath that became you so well,—you know I kept it, for Melitta says a cherished garland preserves true love,—then I would clap my hands and say, 'He must come to-day;' and I would run down to the Nile and wave my handkerchief to every boat, for I thought you must surely be in each of them as they passed. And then I would go back slowly and sadly to the house, where my grandmother would first scold and then kiss me, telling me what a foolish child I was.

"You do not know how much sorrow we have had since you went away. The two children of poor Phanes, a boy beautiful as Eros, and a little girl, so gentle and pretty, lived with us happily for a long time. Grandmother seemed to grow young again, and I gave the children all my heart, though it belonged to you alone.

"One evening we were sitting with Theopompus in the women's room, when we heard a great noise at the door of the house. Old Cnacias had hardly reached it when the bolts were burst open, and a crowd of soldiers rushed through the vestibule into the peristyle, the andronitis, you know, and from thence, after breaking down the door, they forced their way to us. Grandmother showed the

king's letter, by which Amasis had made our house an inviolable asylum. They only laughed at it, and brought out a sealed document, in which Prince Psamtic strictly ordered that the children of Phanes should be at once handed over to this set of ruffians. Theopompus remonstrated with them for their behavior, and told them that the boy and girl were from Corinth, and had nothing to do with Phanes. The captain, however, returned only brutal jeers as his answer, and, pushing my grandmother roughly aside, led the way to her bed-chamber, where, with all her other treasures, the two little ones lay close by her own bed, quietly sleeping. The fellows snatched them up, and took them in an open boat, though the night was cold and damp, to the royal city. After a few weeks the boy was dead. They say that Psamtic murdered him. The little girl is now pining in a lonely prison. Is it not hard, my beloved, that such sorrow should mingle with our happiness?"

"Be comforted, my darling: before the Nile rises again, a mighty host will pour into Egypt, bringing vengeance upon the murderer."

"And, Bartia, you remember the lame soldier, Aristomachus, who took Phanes' place? He has disappeared and nobody knows where he is. They say he threatened the heir-apparent on account of what had been done to the children, and that the latter in revenge has shut him up in a dungeon, if he has not doomed him to what is worse than death,—banishment to the stone-quarries. The poor old man had already been exiled from his own home; and on the very day that we first missed him, an embassy came from the Spartan people to summon him, whose sons had won so much glory for their country, back to the Eurotas with all honor. A ship covered with wreaths awaited him, and the chief of the envoys was his own renowned son."

"Yes, I remember him well, the man of iron who mutilated himself to escape disgrace. We will avenge him, I swear it by the star of Anabita setting yonder in the east."

"Is it so late? Listen! are they not calling? Yes. Then we must part."

"Farewell, my darling; five days hence we shall be united forever."

The next morning, as Theopompus was walking with the young Persians in his garden, Zopyrus congratulated Bartia enthusiastically on his happiness in having such a mistress, and the Milesian was almost as eager in his praises as the younger man, telling them how his wife used to love the beautiful Sappho, and how happy she would be could she know that a wedding-wreath was to be hung on the door of Rhodope."

"Is it, then, your custom also," asked Zopyrus, "to hang flowers upon the house of a bride?"

"Oh, yes," answered Theopompus. "When you see a door covered with garlands, you may know that there is a bride within; if you see an olive-branch, it is a sign that a boy has been born; if a piece of cloth, it is a girl; and a vessel full of water means that some one is dead. Now, friends, the hour of opening market is near, and I must leave you, for I have important business."

"I will go with you," said Zopyrus, "and buy some garlands for Sappho's house."

"Which means," added the Milesian, "that you are hankering after the flower-girl. It is quite useless to deny it. You may come with me if you will; but you must be less munificent than you were yesterday, and remember the part you have to play; it may soon be a dangerous one if more certain information comes about the threatened war."

The Greek, ordering his slave to put his sandals on for him, went with Zopyrus, and after a few hours' absence returned home.

Something very serious must have happened to make the vivacious Milesian as grave as he was when he met his young friends.

"I found," he began, "the whole town in great excitement on account of a report that Amasis was dying. When we were about to close business for the day, and I was on the point of putting up for sale all my goods, which now command a high price, which will fall quickly enough as soon as the rumor of the threatened invasion is confirmed, the toparch appeared among us

with the news that Amasis had been given up by all the physicians and that his death was hourly expected. This, of course, will be a terrible calamity to the Greeks, who have everything to fear from Psamtic. When the old king is no more, all Naucratis will turn for help to the Persians, who know how to honor and protect those who are alien to them."

"I promise," said Bartia, "that my brother will confirm all your ancient privileges and accord you others."

"May he come quickly, then! for Psamtic will not leave one of our temples standing. But here comes Zopyrus, with a forest of garlands carried by my slaves. Welcome, friend; you do not seem much disturbed by the bad news."

"I wish Amasis a hundred years of life; but, if he dies, every one will be too busy to mind us: that will be a consolation. When are you going to see Rhodope?"

"As soon as it is dark."

"Give her these wreaths from me, for I shall not be able to accompany you. You need not ask whither I am going: I certainly shall not tell you."

"And you need not be afraid of our asking," answered Bartia: "we do not need to ask."

When Bartia, Darius, and Theopompus left the house of Rhodope, it was already gray in the east. A noble Greek, Syloson, the brother of Polycrates, whom the tyrant had banished, had been spending the evening with them, and now accompanied them back to Naucratis, where he had lived for several years. This man, who had been twice exiled by his brother, though each time generously provided with money by the tyrant, kept up the most magnificent establishment in the Grecian colony, and was renowned as well for his prodigal hospitality as for his strength, cleverness, and the beauty and splendor of his dress. All the young men of Naucratis vied with each other in imitating the shape and folds of his robe.

As he was a bachelor, he spent many evenings at the house of Rhodope, who, counting him one of her best friends, had told him of her granddaughter's marriage. That evening it had been settled that it should take place

privately in four days. Sappho had sacrificed to Zeus, Hera, and other patron divinities of marriage, and Bartia had eaten the quince with her, whereby they were formally betrothed. Syloson took upon himself the duty of providing the torch-bearers and the singers of the hymenæus. The feast was to be given at the house of Theopompus, as the bridegroom's present home. Bartia's presents had already been given to Sappho, and he had insisted upon bestowing his wife's dowry upon Rhodope.

Syloson went with his friends as far as the house of Theopompus, and was just taking leave of them, when a loud noise resounded through the quiet streets, and a party of Egyptian constables came up with a man in fetters. The prisoner seemed to be very angry, and all the more so that his captors paid little attention to the curses that he poured upon them in broken Greek.

Scarcely had Bartia and Darius heard the voice when they hastened towards the party, and recognized in the delinquent their friend Zopyrus. Syloson and Theopompus asked the chief constable what offence the prisoner had been guilty of. The officer, who knew, as did every child in Naucratis, the Milesian, and the brother of Polycrates, bowed respectfully, and told them that a murder had been committed by the stranger.

Theopompus drew the captain aside and offered a rich reward if he would set his prisoner free; but the officer refused firmly, and would concede nothing but permission to speak to Zopyrus. The reckless young Persian, in answer to his friend's inquiries, related that towards daybreak he left Stephanion, and that just as he shut the house-door behind him, he had been attacked by a party of young men, who had, most probably, been on the watch for him. With one of them, who called himself Stephanion's betrothed, he had had a quarrel the morning before; the wanton had turned her back on her ill-tempered lover, and had thanked Zopyrus for threatening him with a beating. When the Persian saw what their intentions were, he drew his sword and drove back his opponents, who were only armed with clubs; but he had the *misfortune* to wound his jealous rival so severely that the *latter fell to the ground*. In the mean time the constables

had come upon the scene, and they made every effort to arrest Zopyrus, whose victim lay on his back, shrieking, "Murder! robbers!" but he was not disposed to give himself up, and, making a fierce attack upon his adversaries, had almost escaped, when, reinforcements coming up, he was beset on all sides. Again he plied his sword, and this time split open the head of one of his foes; a second blow wounded a soldier in the arm, but before he raised his weapon a third time he felt a rope around his neck, and in another minute he was bound hand and foot: notwithstanding his pass and his assurances that he was a friend of Theopompus, he had to go with his captors.

The Milesian, when Zopyrus had finished his story, reproved him severely, and predicted that most unhappy consequences would follow his rash and foolish conduct; then, turning to the captain of the guard, offered to go security for the Persian, but without avail, for the constable reminded him that, as an officer, he must deliver up the prisoner to the nomarch at Sais, or forfeit his own life for his disobedience, and that to conceal a murderer was an offence punishable with death.

Zopyrus in the mean while besought his friends not to be anxious about him. When Bartia said that he would throw off his disguise and try to use his influence, as brother of Cambyzes, to save his friend, the latter exclaimed,—

"I swear, by Mithra, that I will plunge my sword into my heart if you give yourself up to these Egyptian dogs on my account. The rumor has spread all through the town already that your brother is about to attack Egypt, and should Psamtic learn what precious game is in his net, he will not be long in closing the toils. Auramazda give you health and blessing and prosperity! Farewell, friends, and think of the gay Zopyrus, who has lived for love-making and fighting, and now dies for love-making and fighting."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE RESCUE.

ACCORDING to the Egyptian law, Zopyrus would inevitably be condemned to death ; and as soon as his friends were assured of this, they resolved to go at once to Sais and make an attempt to free him. Syloson, who was well known there, and who could speak Egyptian perfectly, offered his assistance, which was gladly accepted.

Dyeing their hair and eyebrows, putting on broad-brimmed felt hats, and dressing themselves in simple Grecian garments which Theopompus lent them, they met Syloson on the bank of the Nile, an hour after the capture of Zopyrus. Entering a boat belonging to the Samian, after a short sail they arrived before noon at Sais, which stood out like an island from amid the far-spreading waters. In an out-of-the-way part of the town they disembarked, and pressed forward through the mechanics' quarter to their destination.

All around them was the bustle of business ; in the open court of a bakery they saw men engaged in kneading the coarse dough with their feet, and the fine with their hands ; loaves of all sizes were being drawn from the oven ; cakes, in the form of sheep, snails, and hearts, were being laid in baskets. Active fellows were lifting three, four, even five of these panniers on their shoulders to carry them to other parts of the town. A butcher was slaughtering an ox whose legs were tied fast together, while the apprentices were sharpening their knives preparatory to cutting off the legs of a wild goat. Good-humored cobblers called out from their booths to the strangers who were hastening past. Everywhere, carpenters, tailors, joiners, and weavers were all hard at work. The wives of the artisans, with their naked *children*, were coming out of their houses to make purchases, while a few soldiers were hanging about the

wine- and beer-sellers, who were driving their trade in the open air.

Our friends, however, paid little heed to all this, and followed Syloson in silence. When they arrived at the barracks of the Grecian body-guard, he bade them wait for him a few minutes. The Samian, by good luck, happened to know the taxiarch then on duty, and he inquired of him whether he had heard anything about a murderer who had been brought from Naucratis to Sais.

"Certainly," said the Greek. "He was brought here not half an hour ago; they found in his belt a purse full of gold, and they think he is a Persian spy. You know, perhaps, that Cambyses is preparing an expedition against Egypt?"

"Impossible!"

"There is no doubt about it. The government has received full information. Some Arabian merchants, whose caravan arrived yesterday at Pelusium, brought the news."

"It will all prove as false as the suspicion against the Lydian. I know the young fellow well, and pity him very much; he belongs to one of the richest families in Sardis, and fled thence because he had a quarrel with the Persian satrap Oroetes and feared his vengeance. I will tell you the whole story the next time you visit me at Naucratis. You will stay with me a few days, of course, and bring some of your friends with you. My brother has sent me some Samian wine, better than any you ever tasted. I would not offer this drink of the gods except to a man able to appreciate it."

The taxiarch's face brightened as he grasped Syloson's hand. "By the dog, friend, we require no pressing to accept such an invitation. And what do you say to having Archidice, the three flower-sisters, and a couple of flute-players to lunch with us?"

"They shall all be there. And, now that you speak of it, those very flower-girls were the cause of the young Lydian's misfortunes. A jealous clown, with several companions, attacked him in front of their door. My hot-headed friend defended himself——"

"And knocked his enemy down?"

"Yes, so effectually that he will never rise again."

"The young fellow must have a stout fist."

"He had a sword."

"So much the better for him."

"No; so much the worse, for his victim is an Egyptian."

"A bad story, with a worse ending in prospect. A foreigner who kills an Egyptian is as sure of death as any man ever was with the rope around his neck. However, he will have a short reprieve, for the priests are so busy praying for the dying king that they have no time to try criminals."

"I would give a great deal if some one would help the poor fellow. I know his father well."

"Yes, and, after all, he did nothing but pay off his own score. A man can't quietly submit to a thrashing."

"Do you know where he is confined?"

"Oh, yes. The large prison is being rebuilt; so, for the present, he is shut up in a warehouse between the barracks of the Egyptian life-guards and the grove of the temple of Neith. As I came in, I saw them taking him there."

"He is bold and strong. Could he possibly escape, if one were to help him?"

"Never in the world. The room he is in is two stories from the ground, and the only window it has overlooks the grove of the goddess, which, you know, is surrounded by walls ten feet high, and is watched like a treasure-chamber. At all the gates there are double guards. In one place only, where the water washes the wall, there are, of course, no sentries stationed while the inundation lasts. These beast-worshippers are as cunning as water-wagtails."

"Well, then, I suppose we must leave him to his fate. Good-by, Dæmones; don't forget my invitation."

The Samian in a few minutes had rejoined his friends, who were waiting impatiently. When the Greek had described the prison, Darius exclaimed,—

"I do not resign the hope of saving Zopyrus. He is as nimble as a cat, and as strong as a bear. I have a plan——"

"Tell us what it is," said Syloson; "I, too, am by no means in despair."

"We must buy some rope-ladders, a cord, and a good bow; taking them in a boat, we will go, after dark, to that part of the temple-wall where there are no guards. You must help me to climb over it; and I, taking with me all our implements, will sound the eagle-call, which Zopyrus will recognize, for it has been our signal ever since we were boys. Then I will send an arrow with the cord on it into his window,—I am certain of my aim,—and will call to him to haul up the ladder, which I will fasten to the cord. Once up, he can secure it to a nail, which I will see accompanies it, for he may have nothing in his cell to serve the purpose. He can then come down very easily, and we can climb over the wall again by means of a second ladder, get into the boat, and go down the Nile as fast as oars can take us."

"Splendid! splendid!" exclaimed Bartia.

"Yes, but very dangerous. If we are discovered in the holy grove, we shall be severely punished; and to-night the priests celebrate one of their sacred feasts, from which all strangers are excluded. However, the lake is the place chosen for the feast, and it is at a distance from the prison."

"So much the better," said Darius. "Now to our task. We must send at once to Theopompus, and ask him to hire a trireme for us and make everything ready for our departure. The news of Cambyses' expedition has already reached here, and they consider us spies, and will hunt us down if we do not at once leave Egypt; it would be silly to run unnecessary risks. You must take the message, Bartia; and, moreover, it will be your painful duty to marry Sappho this very day, for tomorrow, cost what it may, we must set sail from Naucratis. You must not oppose me, my brother, for you know that in this rescue one person will have to do all the work, and the rest can only stand idly by. Tomorrow we will meet again, for Auramazda watches over the friendship of the good."

Bartia, after much protestation, at last yielded, and set off in search of a boat to take him to Naucratis, while

Syloson and Darius occupied themselves in getting together their necessary implements.

To reach the place where boats were to be obtained for hire, the young prince had to pass the temple of Neith, and this was no easy task, for the people were thronging around the gate of the shrine. When Bartia had made his way as far as the obelisks which stood before the portal, he was held back by one of the priestly servants, who were keeping open the street which was used for processions. The huge doors of the pylon unclosed, and Bartia, who, against his will, was compelled to stand in the front row of the spectators, saw a gorgeous train of dignitaries and officials come sweeping past him. So occupied was he by the unexpected sight of many familiar faces that he did not notice the loss of his broad-brimmed hat, which had been torn from his head as he struggled through the crowd.

From the conversation of some Ionian soldiers who stood near, he learned that the family of Amasis had been praying and offering sacrifices for the dying king. Richly-dressed priests, clothed in panther-skins, or in long white robes, headed the procession; behind them followed the officials of the court, carrying golden staves, which were tipped with silver lotos-flowers, or with peacock's feathers; then came priests, who bore on their shoulders a golden cow, sacred to Isis.

The people having done homage to the holy image, the queen drew near, arrayed in a priestly garment, her head adorned with a winged sun, and two uræus-serpents, or asps, of gold; she bore in her left hand a golden sistrum, whose sound was to drive away the evil Typhon, and in her right, blue lotos-blossoms. After her came the wife of the high-priest, with his sister and daughter, dressed like the queen, though less richly. Then followed the heir-apparent; and immediately behind him Tachot, the daughter of Amasis and Ladice, was borne in a litter on the shoulders of four young priests. Her cheeks were flushed, partly from the summer heat and partly from the earnestness of her devotion. Her blue eyes, filled with tears, were bent upon the sistrum, which her weak hands were scarcely able to hold.

A murmur of sympathy passed through the crowd, who loved and commiserated the old king and his dying daughter. Tachot seemed to notice it. She raised her eyes from the sistrum and looked kindly down upon the people.

Suddenly the glow faded from her cheeks, and a deadly paleness took its place. The golden instrument fell ringing upon the stones close by Bartia's feet. The young man saw that he was discovered, and for a moment debated whether or not to hide himself among the bystanders; but he did not hesitate long, for his knightly spirit triumphed over every fear, and quick as thought he stooped to pick up the sistrum; and, scorning all danger, handed it to the young princess, who gazed inquiringly at him without taking it from his hands, and said, in a low voice,—

“Bartia! By your mother, I conjure you, tell me, are you Bartia?”

“I am he; Bartia, your friend.” He could say no more; for the temple-servants forced him back to his former place.

When he looked around again, he saw that Tachot, whose litter was being carried on with the rest of the procession, had turned back that she might see him once more. He made no effort to avoid her gaze, but stooped a second time and lifted up a flower that she had let fall at his feet. In another moment he had forced his way through the throng, whose curiosity he had aroused by his rash conduct, and disappeared. A quarter of an hour later he was sitting in a boat on his way to Naucratis and Sappho. All anxiety for Zopyrus was at an end. He felt confident of the safety of his friend; and, in spite of all threatening dangers, an inexpressible sense of happiness filled his soul.

In the mean time the Egyptian princess had reached the palace, and, bidding her maids take off her festal robes, she had herself carried out into a balcony, where, protected from the fierce rays of the sun by the broad leaves of some bushes, and by a tent-like screen, she loved to pass the long summer days. She could look thence upon the great palace-yard filled with trees, and

to-day crowded with priests, courtiers, generals, and nomarchs, and all the dignitaries of the land; for every moment the anxiety grew deeper as the hour of the king's death approached. The maiden from her place of concealment could hear every word that was said, and now knew for the first time that there was no hope of her father's recovery. The prospect of losing their sovereign drew praises of their lord and benefactor from all lips; one spoke of his sagacity, another of his military glory, another of his kindness and condescension, another of his wise economy, another of his brilliant wit, and so through all the catalogue of his virtues, which, to do the old king justice, was indeed a long one.

Convinced of the certainty of her father's death, Tachot begged her handmaidens in vain to carry her to his bedside. She turned a deaf ear to all that was passing below, and fixed her eyes upon the golden sistrum that Bartia had placed in her hands, and which she still clasped as though in it she found consolation; and in truth the sound of the golden rings of the sacred instrument carried her away from this world of pain and sorrow into a land of eternal sunshine. She had fallen into that happy slumber which fills the last hours of the consumptive with golden dreams. And never had she seemed so beautiful as at that moment,—so the slave-women, who were fanning her, told Ladice afterwards.

It may have been an hour that she lay asleep, when her breath began to come slowly and painfully, and, with a slight cough that brought the blood to her lips, she awoke. She looked around with a bewildered air, and when her eyes fell upon her mother kneeling beside her, her face lighted up with a smile of unutterable joy, and she exclaimed,—

“Oh, mother, I have had such beautiful dreams!”

“Going to the temple did you good, my child,” answered the queen.

“Oh, yes! yes! for, mother, it was there that I saw him again.”

Ladice looked up anxiously at the servants, as if she would ask, “Is your mistress delirious?” Tachot observed the movement, and said, firmly,—

"You think I am wandering in my talk; but I tell you I saw him, mother, and not only saw him, but spoke to him. He put this sistrum in my hands, and said he was my friend. Then he picked up a lotos-bud that I had dropped, and disappeared in the crowd. Don't look so troubled, my mother: I am telling the truth; it was no dream. There,—you hear?—Tent-rut saw him also. He must have journeyed to Sais for my sake, and the child's oracle has come true at last. The pain has all left me, and I dreamed that I lay in a field of poppies as red as the blood of the young lambs of the altar. Bartia sat at my side, and Nitetis knelt near us, and played wondrous music on a nabra of ivory; and as the song filled the air, it was as though Horus, the beautiful god of the morning and of the spring, were kissing me. Yes, my mother, I tell you he will come, and when I am well, then, then——"

Thus in peace and hope and joy the daughter of Amasis passed to her rest in the kingdom of Osiris.

An hour later, Ladice stood by another death-bed, on which lay her husband. When she entered the room, he looked up quickly, and asked,—

"Why did you not bring Tachot with you?"

"She is too ill."

"She is dead: and it is well with her; death is no punishment, but the crowning end of life,—the only end we ever reach without toil; but even this, the gods know, we pass to through many sorrows. Osiris has taken her. She was innocent and spotless. Nitetis too is dead. Where is Nebenchari's letter? Listen: 'She took her own life, and passed away, cursing thee and thine with her dying lips. This news, which is as assuredly true as my hate to thee, is sent from Babylon to Egypt by the poor, banished, despised, and plundered physician.' Send for Psamtic and Neithotep: I have something to say to them."

When the prince and the high-priest entered the room, the old king, with one last effort, gathered up all his strength, and, in a clear voice, gave his dying counsels to those who were so soon to succeed to his place and power. When he had finished, sinking back exhausted, he said, in a voice scarcely audible,—

“Read the prayers for the dying, Neithotep. Oh that Nitetis had not cursed us! But fear not, Psamtic: it will fall on your mother and me alone. It can never harm you or yours. Bring me my grandchild. What! tears in these old eyes? It is hard to part from the least of what has grown dear to us.”

That evening there was a new guest at the house of Rhodope, Callias, the son of Phænippus,—the same whom we met before, the night that he gave the account of the Olympian games. The Athenian had just come from his own country, and, as an old and valued friend, had been made a confidant of the important secret of the house. Cnacias had, two days before, taken down the pennon which was the sign of hospitable welcome to all the world; but was too well instructed to refuse admittance to this distinguished fellow-countryman of his mistress.

Callias was now sitting with Rhodope and her granddaughter in the garden, and, having told all his news, was amusing himself by teasing Sappho, who was anxiously looking for her lover. At last, as Bartia did not come, Callias asked Melitta to fetch him from the house the stringed instrument that he had brought with him. When the old woman came back with the lute, of gold and ivory, he said, laughingly, as he handed it to the girl,—

“The divine Anacreon, inventor of this kind of lute, had this one made especially for me. He gives it the name of ‘barbiton,’ and draws from it wonderful tones that will echo even through gloomy Hades. I told the poet, whose whole life is an offering to the Muses, to Eros and Dionysus, about you, and he made me promise to bring you as a gift from himself this song, which he wrote about you :—

“The Phrygian rock, that braves the storm,
Was once a weeping matron’s form;
And Progne, hapless, frantic maid,
Is now a swallow in the shade.
Oh that a mirror’s form were mine,
That I might catch that smile divine,
And, like my own fond fancy, be
Reflecting thee, and only thee;

Or, could I be the robe which holds
 That graceful form within its folds,
 Or, turned into a fountain, lave
 Thy beauties in my circling wave.
 Would I were perfume for thy hair,
 To breathe my soul in fragrance there;
 Or, better still, the zone that lies
 Close to thy breast, and feels its sighs;
 Or ev'n those envious pearls that show
 So faintly round that neck of snow;
 Yes, I would be a happy gem,
 Like them to hang, to fade like them.
 What more would thy Anacreon be?
 Oh anything that touches thee,
 Nay, sandals for thy airy feet;
 Ev'n to be trod by them were sweet.*

"Are you angry with the bold poet?"

"Why should I be? Poets must be allowed much license."

"Yes, and a poet——"

"Who shows such good taste in the selection of his messenger?"

"You flatter me,—though, indeed, twenty years ago my voice and style were passing good. But, by Hercules, child, how pale you are!—you need not be so anxious,—who can tell what may delay Bartia?"

"Nothing, nothing whatever," exclaimed a voice behind them, and a moment later Sappho, in her lover's arms, had forgotten all her anxiety.

"But now," said the young prince, when the ceremony of presentation to Callias was over, "I must go in search of Rhodope at once; instead of four days hence, our marriage must take place to-night; every hour of delay is dangerous. Is Theopompus here?"

"I fancy so, for I cannot imagine what else is keeping my grandmother in the house. But what is this about the marriage? I think——"

"First, let us go into the house, for a storm is coming up,—the sky is black, and it is unendurably sultry."

"Then come at once, if you do not wish me to faint with curiosity; you need not be afraid of a thunder-

* Moore's "Anacreon."

shower; never, as long as I can remember, has such a thing happened at this time of year."

"Then we shall have a phenomenon to-day, that is all," said the Athenian, laughing. "This very moment a drop of rain fell on my bald head. I noticed, too, as I came up the Nile, that the swallows skimmed along the water, instead of flying high. Now—do you see?—a cloud is passing over the moon. Come into the house, quickly. Ho! slaves, there, see that a black lamb is sacrificed to the gods of Hades."

As Sappho had supposed, Theopompus was sitting with Rhodope. He had come to tell her of the arrest of Zopyrus, and the expedition of Bartia, Darius, and Syloson to Sais. In proportion to the anxiety they felt with regard to the young son of Cyrus, was their relief when he entered the room with Callias and Sappho. He proceeded to relate all the events of the last few hours, and, in conclusion, begged the Milesian to procure a ship at once for their departure.

"This is the most fortunate thing in the world!" exclaimed Callias. "There is my trireme which brought me to Naucratis, all manned and fitted out, and ready to your service. I shall only have to send word to the captain to get the sailors together. Oh, you are under no obligations to me at all; on the contrary, you do me an honor by using my poor craft. Here, Cnacias, tell my slave, Philomelus, who is waiting in the vestibule, to hire a boat and go out into the harbor and order my captain, Nausarchus, to get ready to sail at once. Here, take this ring——"

"And my slaves?" asked Bartia.

"Cnacias can tell my steward to have them taken to the ship of Callias," answered Theopompus.

"And now, my mother," continued Bartia, "I have a petition to make of you?"

"I can guess it, and will grant it. You want the marriage to take place to-night?"

"If I am not greatly mistaken," said Callias, "here are two people in mortal peril, and yet secretly rejoiced thereat."

"I cannot say you are wrong," said Bartia, as he

turned to ask Rhodope formally to give him her granddaughter to be his wife.

The old woman placed the girl's hand in that of the Persian prince, and, with a few simple words of counsel to the young people, she intrusted her child's future fate to the stranger. And so, after months of anxiety and sorrow in the past, with imminent dangers threatening them in the future, without rite or ceremony, the long-separated lovers were united forever.

"That was a simple wedding," said Rhodope, "was it not? The gods seemed to forbid the singing of the hymenæus. Go, Melitta, and bring the bridal ornaments, the bracelets and necklaces, which you will find in the bronze casket on my toilette-table, that our darling may go to her husband as befits a princess."

"Make haste," exclaimed Callias. "But, Rhodope, the niece of the writer of the most celebrated epithalamium of all time must not enter her bridal chamber without music and song. Since the home of the bridegroom is so far away, we will pretend that this empty andronitis is his dwelling. Thither we will carry the bride, through the middle door, and around the hearth we will hold the wedding-feast. Here, ye slave-women, divide yourselves into two choruses. *You* will represent the youths, and *you*, the maidens. Your song will be the hymenæus of Sappho, 'As in the mountains.' I myself will be torch-bearer, an office especially suitable to me; for you must know, Bartia, that my family has the hereditary right of carrying the lights at the mysteries of Eleusis, hence we are called 'Daduchi,' or 'torch-bearers.' Here, slave, see that garlands are hung around the door of the andronitis, and tell your company to pelt us with comfits as we enter. Why, Melitta, how have you made those beautiful crowns of violets and myrtle for the bride and bridegroom in such a marvellously short space of time? How the rain pours through the opening in the roof! See! Hymen has persuaded Zeus to assist at our ceremonial. Since you cannot take the bath on the wedding-morning that old usage requires, you must stand a moment in the rain, and let it be as the consecrated water. Now begin the song; let the bride lament the loss of her maid-

enhood, and let the youths praise the lot of the young wife."

Then five well-trained voices began to sing, in a melancholy strain,—

"As in the mountains the shepherd treads down the hyacinth-flower,
So that the delicate bells, the nurslings of sun and of shower,
Faded and withered lie dying, thus it is when her treasure,
Trembling, the fearful maiden yields to her loved one's pleasure;
For the youths and the virgins alike then scornfully flee us,
Hymen, O Hymenæus! Hymen, O Hymenæus!"

And the other chorus of deeper voices gave back the answer in jubilant tones:—

"As the young vine in the wilderness pines away, barren, forsaken,
Till, with her branches clasped round him, the elm in her arms she
has taken,
Putting forth ripe-hanging fruit, making merry the heart of the
peasant,
So is the maiden who weds in her youth, joyous and pleasant,
Loved of her lord and her parents. Virgins, how can ye flee us?
Hymen, O Hymenæus! Hymen, O Hymenæus!"

Then both choruses sang together, "Hymen, O Hymenæus," now longingly, now rejoicingly, when suddenly the song ceased, as a flash of lightning, followed by a deafening thunder-clap, lighted up the room.

"See!" exclaimed the Daduchus, pointing to heaven, "Zeus himself waves the wedding-torch and sings the Hymenæus for his children."

Early the next morning Bartia and Sappho left their room to go out into the garden, which, after the storm that had raged all night, looked as beautiful and joyous as the face of the young bride herself. They had risen thus betimes, because Bartia's anxiety for his friends, which, in the intoxication of his happiness, had faded from his mind for a few hours, would not suffer him to sleep.

The garden lay on the side of an artificial hill, and looked down thence over the flooded plain. On the surface of the river floated lotos-flowers, both blue and white, around which flew waterfowl of many kinds, now fluttering down upon the tops of the palms, and now rising,

with noisy cries, into the air, as the gaudy sail of a Nile-boat passed close beneath. A fresh northeast wind bore up the stream a succession of vessels, large and small; and the song of the sailors, with the plash of the oars and the twittering of the birds, seemed to fill the monotonous scene with new life.

The young lovers stood whispering to each other, as they bent over the low wall surrounding the garden of Rhodope, when Bartia's sharp eyes suddenly caught sight of a vessel which, with sail and oar, was making all speed for the house of the Thracian. A few minutes later, Zopyrus and his rescuers stood before them.

The scheme of Darius—thanks to the thunder-storm, which, from its unseasonable arrival and unusual violence, had struck a panic into the hearts of the Egyptians—had succeeded perfectly; still there was no time to be lost, for the authorities at Sais would certainly raise a hue and cry after them at once.

After a short and tender farewell, Sappho parted from her grandmother, and, accompanied by Melitta, who was to go with her to Persia, entered Syloson's boat, and an hour later the luxuriously-furnished "Hygieia," the swift-sailing ship of Callias. The Athenian stood waiting for the fugitives on board his trireme, and took a hearty farewell of them, especially of Sappho and Bartia. The latter hung around the old man's neck, in sign of his gratitude, a costly chain; and Syloson, in remembrance of their late adventure, made Darius a present of his scarlet robe, a marvel of Sidonian art. The young Persian thanked his friend, and said, as he parted from him,—

"Remember, I owe you much, and you must promise to give me an opportunity of repaying you."

"Yes, but you must apply to me first if you are in trouble," said Zopyrus. "I will share my last gold piece with you. I would even sit a week in that cursed hole again, if it could do you any good. They are weighing anchor. Farewell, my noble Greek. Greet the flower-sisters for me, especially little Stephanion, and tell her, thanks to me, her long-legged lover will not trouble her soon again. One thing more: take this purse and give it

to the wife and children of that poor Egyptian beggar that I handled so roughly."

While Zopyrus was speaking, the anchors fell rattling upon the deck. The wind filled out the swelling sails, and from the hold rang forth the celeusma, or galley-song, which the trieraules led with his flute. The prow, bearing the image of Hygieia, pushed slowly out towards the sea. Bartia and Sappho stood at the stern, and looked back at Naucratis till the last dim line of the river-bank faded on the horizon and the vessel was cutting its way through the green waters of the Mediterranean.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CAMBYSES' VENGEANCE.

AT Ephesus Bartia and Sappho heard, for the first time, of the death of Amasis. Thence they went to Babylon, and from Babylon to Pasargadæ, in the province of Persia. Here were Cassandane, Atossa, and Cræsus; the queen-mother wished, before starting for Egypt, to visit the monument which had been raised to the memory of her dead husband under the direction of the old Lydian. It consisted of a gigantic sarcophagus of marble, built in the form of a house, and supported on six high steps, also of marble. The interior of the sarcophagus was furnished like a chamber, and, besides the coffin, which held what the dogs and vultures had spared of the body of Cyrus, contained a silver bed, and a table of the same metal, on which were placed golden cups, and all kinds of robes, richly adorned with jewels. The height of the building was about forty feet. Shady paradises, or pleasure-gardens, and stately colonnades surrounded it, and in the midst of the grove rose the house of the Magus whose duty it was to keep everything in good order. In the distance could be seen the palace of Cyrus,

where, by his direction, the kings of Persia were to reside every year for a few months at least. In this fortress-like building was the treasury of the empire, no other place in the kingdom being so difficult of access.

Cassandane, in the mountain-air, soon recovered her health, and rejoiced to see that Atossa seemed to be outliving the sorrow that Darius' departure and the death of Nitetis had caused her. Sappho soon learned to love the royal ladies, nor did her own grace and beauty fail in winning their affection. Darius and Zopyrus were with the grand army on the plain of the Euphrates. Bartia, too, was under orders to return to Babylon before the expedition should start.

Cambyses came to meet his family, who had left Pasargadæ with much regret, and expressed great admiration for his new sister-in-law, who, as she confessed to Bartia, felt only fear for her husband's brother. The king was terribly altered in the last few months: his once pale and almost handsome features were now, from constant drunkenness, red and bloated; his dark eyes were as bright as ever, but they seemed to glow with a lurid fire; his hair, now very gray, hung unkempt about his head; and the proud, self-satisfied smile of former days had given place to an expression of gloomy sternness and unutterable satiety. Only when intoxicated, now his normal condition, was he ever known to laugh; nor was that laugh a pleasant thing to hear. Towards his wives he felt the same disgust that he had experienced for the first time after seeing Nitetis; and, while all his grandees had their spouses and concubines with them, he left his harem behind at Susa.

For all this, no one could complain of any injustice on his part; on the contrary, he insisted more strictly than ever upon the exact fulfilment of every obligation and the careful maintenance of every right. But whenever the guilt of any one was entirely proved, fearful was the punishment that followed: for instance, when he was informed that a certain judge, named Sisamnes, had been bribed to give a wrong decision, he ordered the miserable wretch to be flayed alive, and had the judicial chair covered with the skin of its late occupant; he then ap-

pointed the son judge in his father's place, and compelled him to sit in this horrible seat.

The king's chief occupation was to drill and review the troops collected near Babylon. After the new-year's feast in March, the expedition was to start. He celebrated the ceremonies with great splendor, and when they were over betook himself to the army, where he met his brother, who told him, with great joy, that he hoped before long to be a father. The king trembled, and made no answer, but that evening drank himself senseless, and the next morning called all the Mobeds, Magi, and Chaldeans together, that he might ask them a question.

"You know," he began, "that you said, when you explained my dreams, that Atossa would give birth to the future kings of this land. Shall I sin against the gods if I take my sister to wife and make my dream true?"

The Magi consulted together for a little while, and then Oropastes, the chief priest, threw himself at the king's feet, and said,—

"We do not believe that thou wilt sin by such a marriage, for it is the custom among the Persians to marry their relatives; and, moreover, though it is not in general lawful for a righteous man to wed his sister, yet the king may do whatsoever is pleasing in his sight. Do as thou wishest, and thou wilt yet always do right."

Cambyzes dismissed the Magi with munificent gifts, bestowed upon Oropastes full powers as viceroy of the kingdom, and announced to his horrified mother his intention of marrying Atossa after he had conquered the Egyptians and punished the son of Amasis.

At last the army, consisting of eight hundred thousand soldiers, took up its march in separate divisions, and in two months had arrived at the Syrian desert, where it joined the Arab tribes of the Amalekites and Jeshurites, who had been won over by Phanes, and who now furnished the soldiers with water, which had been carried on the backs of horses and camels. At Accho, in the land of the Canaanites, were assembled the fleets of the Syrians, Phœnicians, and Ionians, together with

the auxiliary ships of the Cyprians and Samians, which Phanes had succeeded in obtaining.

About the latter there was one curious circumstance. Polycrates saw, in the request of Cambyses for a fleet, an excellent opportunity of ridding himself of such of the citizens as were dissatisfied with his rule. He had, therefore, forty triremes manned with eight thousand discontented Samians, and these men he sent to the Persians, with the request that none of them should ever return again. When Phanes heard of this, he warned the victims, who, instead of going to Egypt, turned back to Samos and endeavored to overthrow Polycrates. They were defeated, however, and fled to Sparta, to seek assistance there against the oppressor.

A full month before the time of the inundation, the Persian and Egyptian armies confronted each other before the walls of Pelusium. If the former host was gigantic, certainly the latter was by no means contemptible in point of size, deserters having informed Cambyses that it amounted to at least six hundred thousand men, with the best and most ancient fortress in Egypt at its back. Besides a large number of fighters in chariots, the thirty thousand Carian and Ionian soldiers, and a corps called Mazai, whose duty it was to guard prisoners and to do other work of a like kind, there were collected under the banners of Psamtich two hundred and fifty thousand Calasiries, one hundred and sixty thousand Hermotybies, twenty thousand cavalry, and over fifty thousand auxiliaries, among whom the Libyan Maschawascha, for their military glory, and the Ethiopians, for their immense numbers, were the most conspicuous.

The infantry was divided into regiments and companies, each with its own standard and peculiar weapon,—the heavy armed with lances, daggers, and large shields; the soldiers who fought with sword and battle-axe having light clubs and small shields; slingers, also, and archers, who formed the principal part of the army, and whose unbent bows were the height of a man. The cavalry wore nothing but a simple tunic, and carried light clubs; while the charioteers, who belonged to the highest order of the warrior-caste, went into battle gorgeously arrayed.

They were accustomed to spend immense sums upon their two-wheeled chariots and their world-renowned steeds. Each had his driver, and therefore could devote his entire attention to the combat, which he carried on with spear and bow.

In the number of their foot-soldiers the two armies were about equal; but the Persian cavalry outnumbered that of the Egyptians six to one.

Cambyzes' first step was to have the field cleared of all the trees and undergrowth that might interfere with the movements of his horsemen; and, thanks to the local knowledge of Phanes, he was able to show his officers where the swamps lay that would be a fatal obstacle to their attacks. In the council of war, also, the Athenian extorted praise from all the Persian generals by the plan of battle which he proposed; and just before the leaders of the army were about to separate, he asked permission to speak a second time:—

“I can at last gratify your curiosity about the closed wagons full of animals that I have had brought here. They contain five thousand cats. You laugh; but I assure you that these beasts will be of more service to us than a hundred thousand warriors. Many of you must have heard of the superstition of the Egyptians, who would rather die than kill a cat. I myself came near having to expiate such a murder with my life. Remembering this folly, when on my way hither, I gave orders in Cyprus, celebrated for its mousers, and in Samos, Crete, and Syria also, that all the cats that could be caught should be brought to me. And I would now propose to you that they be divided among those of our men who are to attack the Egyptian contingents, and that the soldiers be directed to fasten them upon their shields. I wager every faithful child of the black country will fly sooner than hurt one of the sacred animals.”

Shouts of laughter followed this proposal, which, however, was fully approved of. Cambyzes offered the ingenious Greek his hand to kiss, and not only fully reimbursed Phanes for his trouble and expense, but also bestowed fresh gifts upon him, and urged him to wed a high-born Persian woman of his court.

The Athenian, excusing himself from attending the royal banquet on the plea of military duties, went directly to his tent. There he found his slaves disputing with a long-bearded old man, dressed in dirty rags, who was demanding to speak with their master. Phanes, taking him for a beggar, threw him a gold piece. The old man, not heeding the generous alms, seized hold of the Athenian's cloak, exclaiming,—

“I am Aristomachus of Sparta.”

Phanes at once recognized his friend, terribly changed as he was, and, leading him into the tent, bade the slaves wash his feet and anoint his hair. Then he gave him wine and meat, took off his rags, and wrapped a new chiton around the veteran's shoulders.

Aristomachus submitted in silence to all this care and attention; and, when his meal had given him fresh strength, he told, in answer to the Athenian's questions, all that had befallen since we last heard of him. It seemed that when Psamtic had murdered the son of Phanes, the old Spartan had gone at once to the prince, and had informed him that he, as their commander, would instantly issue orders to the Greek soldiers to leave the Egyptian service, if the son of Amasis did not immediately set the Athenian's daughter at liberty and give a satisfactory explanation of the fate of the other child. The heir-apparent promised to consider the proposal. Two days later, however, as Aristomachus was making a journey on the Nile by night to Memphis, he was seized by some Ethiopian soldiers, who, having bound him hand and foot, threw him into the hold of a ship, which, after the expiration of several days, anchored at a place on the river-bank that he had never seen before. He was released from his captivity, and taken in the intense heat through a desert, past some curiously-shaped rocks, and in an easterly direction. They reached at length a range of mountains, at whose foot he saw a large number of huts. In these dwelt hundreds of wretched prisoners, who, with chains on their feet, were driven every day into the shaft of the mine, to break up the hard quartz in search of gold. Many of these miserable beings had been in this hell on earth for forty years and upwards; though

the greater number, owing to the fearful labor which was exacted from them, and the scorching heat of the sun all day, were mercifully released by an early death.

"My companions," continued Aristomachus, "were murderers condemned to death, whose sentences had been commuted; traitors, also, with their tongues cut out, and men like myself, considered dangerous to the state. For three months I worked with this crew, enduring blows from the taskmasters, fainting with the heat at mid-day, and shivering with the cold at night, when the dew fell on my naked limbs, devoted to death, but still living on in the hope of avenging my wrongs. The gods ordained that at the feast of Pacht all our keepers, in obedience to the Egyptian custom, should drink so much wine that, falling into the sleep that Bacchus sends, they failed to notice that two of their prisoners—a young Jew who had been convicted of using false weights, and who in consequence had lost his right hand, and the old wooden-legged Spartan—had made their escape. Zeus Lacedæmonius and the great god of that youth darkened the eyes of our pursuers, whose voices we could often hear quite close behind us. By means of a bow that I had stolen from one of the keepers, we obtained subsistence; and when there was no game to be had, we ate roots, berries, and birds' eggs.

"We guided our course by the sun and the stars. We knew that the Red Sea was not far from the mines, and that the latter were to the south of Memphis. Before very long we reached the shores of the Erythræan, and then, turning to the north, we kept on our way without flagging, and were fortunate enough to fall in with some friendly sailors, who took good care of us until an Arabian boat came by, which gave me and the young Jew, who could speak the language of the mariners, a passage to Ezion-geber, in the land of the Edomites. There we heard that Cambyzes was coming with a great host against Egypt; and, joining company with some Amalek- itish horsemen who were carrying a supply of water to the Persians, we journeyed on to Harma. Thence I travelled with some stragglers of your army, who kindly let me ride every now and then on their horses, until we

reached Pelusium, where I learned that you are serving the great king in the capacity of general. I have kept my oath, and have returned to Egypt true to my duty towards my fellow-countrymen. It is your turn now to help old Aristomachus, and grant him the only boon he asks for, vengeance upon his oppressors."

"You shall have it!" exclaimed the Athenian. "I will put you at the head of the Milesians, and then you must find out your enemy for yourself. And, praise be to the gods, I can make you happy by a single word. Know, then, that, a few days after your disappearance, a Spartan ship, sent by the Ephori, and commanded by your illustrious son, came to Naucratis, for the purpose of bringing the father of the Olympian conquerors back to his home."

The eyes of the old man filled with tears as he murmured, "I see it all now; the oracle is fulfilled. Pardon thy servant, O Phœbus Apollo, that he ever doubted the words of the priestess. How ran they? Was it not thus?—

"What time the host of the mighty the snow-clad mountains descendeth,
Down to the low-lying meadows, washed by the life-giving river,
Then will the tarrying boat bring thee to the fields that thou lovest,
Where the wandering feet will rest henceforward forever;
What time the host of the mighty the snow-clad mountains descendeth,
Then will the five who give judgment bestow the boon they deny thee."

Yes, now the promise is made true to the very letter, and I may return home; but first I pray thee, Dike, eternal, all-powerful Justice, refuse me not vengeance upon my oppressors."

"To-morrow is the day of recompense," exclaimed Phanes. "To-morrow I offer up the victim to the manes of my boy, and will not lie down to rest till Cambyses has pierced, with the arrows that I have fashioned, the heart of Egypt. Come, my friend, I will take you to the king. One man like you can put to flight an army of these pebble slingers."

The night had fallen, and the Persian soldiers stood in their ranks, armed and ready to guard their defenceless camp from any incursion of the enemy. Cambyses rode along the lines with words of encouragement for his men. The centre was not yet in position, for it was to consist

of the Persian body-guard, that is, "the Apple-bearers," the "Immortals," as they were called, and the Achæmenides, and they never moved until the king himself was ready to lead them to the onset. The Greeks of Asia Minor also, by Phanes' command, were not on guard, but, equipped in complete armor, took their rest, while their general kept watch for them.

Aristomachus was received by the Ionians with shouts of joy, and was graciously greeted by the king, who placed him in command of one-half of the Hellenic troops, who were to stand to the left of the centre, while Phanes, with the other half, was to take his position on the right of the royal body-guards. Cambyses himself was to be at the head of the ten thousand "Immortals," whose standards were the imperial banner of blue, red, and gold, and the ancient pennon of Cavus. Bartia was to lead the Persian mounted body-guards, a thousand in number, and the mail-clad cavalry. Cræsus undertook the charge of guarding the camp, in which were the wives and treasures of the nobles, together with the mother and sister of the king.

When Mithra, the golden sun, had risen above the horizon, and all the evil spirits of night were hiding in their caverns, the holy fire, which had been brought from Babylon, was fed with ointments and incense by the Magi and the king, and, as the flame mounted up to heaven, Cambyses offered the sacrifice and, with the golden bowl held aloft, prayed for victory and glory. Then he gave the Persians their watchword, "Auramazda" (Helper and Guide), and took his place at the head of his guards, whose tiaras were crowned with garlands. The Greeks also celebrated their rites, and shouted for joy when the priests announced that the omens were favorable. "Hebe" was their countersign.

In the mean time the Egyptian priests had begun the day with prayer and sacrifice, and, when that was concluded, the army was marshalled for the fight. Psamtic, now king, had his post in the centre, in his golden chariot, with rests for his bow of the same metal. His horses were caparisoned in purple and gold and bore tall ostrich-feathers on their heads; his charioteer, a scion of one of

the most illustrious families of Egypt, stood on his left, holding the whip and reins. Psamtic himself wore the double crown, as lord of Upper and of Lower Egypt. To the left of the centre were the Hellenic and Carian soldiers; the cavalry was posted on each flank of the army; while the Egyptian and Ethiopian infantry were stationed to the right and to the left of the Greeks and the charioteers.

Psamtic rode down the lines, inspecting and greeting his soldiers, and finally halted in front of the Greeks, to whom he thus spoke:—

“I rejoice, ye brave, whose deeds of arms in Cyprus and Libya I have not forgotten, that I can share your glory and crown your heads with fresh laurels to-day. Do not fear that if we conquer I shall rob you of your liberties. Slanderers may accuse me of such baseness; but I tell you that, if victorious to-day, I will call you the pillars of my throne, and will be gracious to you and your children while I sit in the seat of the Pharaohs. Remember that you are fighting to-day not for me only, but for your distant home also. Think you that if master of Egypt, Cambyses will hold back his hand from beautiful Hellas and the islands of the Ægean? I need not put you in mind that these latter lie between Egypt and your down-trodden fellow-countrymen in Asia. Your shouts tell me that you believe me. One word more. It is my duty to proclaim the infamy of a man who has sold not Egypt only, but his own country also, for the gold of Persia. That man is Phanes. Nay, murmur not; I swear to you that Phanes has accepted a bribe from Cambyses, and has promised first to lead him to Egypt and then to open to him the portals of your own country. He is a base adventurer and will sell himself to the highest bidder. See him yonder, approaching his master and grovelling in the dust before him. Can that be a son of Hellas? I ever believed that the Greeks bowed down to none but the gods; but a traitor is no longer a citizen. You applaud me; you confirm my words; you scorn to call him countryman. Therefore I will deliver to you this wretch's daughter, whom, sold by him together with his native land, I have held as hostage. Do with her as

you will. Adorn her with roses and fall down before, her if you like; but forget not that she is the child of him who, disgracing his name, has betrayed you and your country."

The soldiers burst out into wild shouts, and took the trembling girl from the king. One of them held her up, that her father, who was but a bow-shot from them, might not fail to recognize her. At the same time an Egyptian, who was renowned for his loud voice, cried out,—

"See, Athenian, how we in this land punish hireling traitors!"

A Carian then, holding the child over the great mixing-bowl, from which, by the king's permission, he and his fellows had drunk themselves mad, plunged his sword into her breast and let the innocent blood flow into the vessel. Filling his cup with the horrible drink, he drained it as if he were toasting the health of the unhappy father, who was not spared one detail of the frightful scene. Then the other soldiers rushed like wild beasts to the bowl and swallowed every drop of the inhuman libation.

At that moment, Psamtic, wild with triumph, shot the first arrow at the Persians. The Greeks, throwing the body of the girl upon the ground, set up their battle-song, and rushed, far ahead of the Egyptians, into the midst of the enemy's ranks.

When the sun stood at its mid-day height, the victory seemed to be with the Egyptians; but when the day-star sank, the Persians were carrying everything before them. And when the full moon shone out, the army of Psamtic was flying in wild disorder from the field of battle, only to fall under the swords of the Asiatics, or perish miserably in the waters of the Nile or the swamps of Pelusium. Twenty thousand Persians and fifty thousand Egyptians lay dead on the shore of the sea; while the wounded, the drowned, and the prisoners were beyond computation. Psamtic, who had been among the last to leave the field, mounted on one of the best of his horses, had succeeded in reaching the opposite bank of the Nile. Though slightly wounded, he at once gathered together a few thousand of his soldiers, and hastened to

Memphis, the strongly-fortified city of the Pyramids. Few of the Grecian auxiliaries were left, so fearful had been the vengeance of Phanes. Ten thousand Carians were led away into captivity, and with his own hand had the Athenian struck down the murderer of his child.

Though Aristomachus had fought like a lion, his efforts as well as those of his friend, to seize Psamtic were entirely fruitless.

When the fight was over, the priests celebrated the victory with songs of triumph, and Cambyses proceeded to divide the spoil: to the soldiers he gave coined money, and to the officers gorgeous apparel, chains, rings, swords, and stars of precious stones.

The principal attacks of the Egyptians had been made with so much fury upon the Persian centre, where the king was, that the guards were beginning to yield, when Bartia came up with his cavalry just in time to give them fresh courage; and his valor and promptitude succeeded in turning the fate of the day. The Persians greeted him with shouts wherever he appeared, hailing him "Victor of Pelusium!" "The bravest of the Achæmenides!" The king did not fail to hear this, and it kindled afresh his jealous hatred of Bartia: it was gall and bitterness to him to think that all his bravery and generalship, without this boy's help, would have availed naught; and the very sight of his brother's happy face would make him clinch his fist in impotent rage.

Phanes was lying wounded in his tent, and with him the dying Aristomachus. "The oracle lied," gasped the old man. "I die, and shall never see my own country."

"The oracle did not lie," returned Phanes. "What were its words?—

*'Then will the tarrying boat bring thee to the fields that thou lovest,
Where the wandering feet will rest henceforward forever.'*

"You misunderstood this sentence. 'The tarrying boat' is that of Charon, who takes you to your last home, the great resting-place of all wanderers, the kingdom of Hades."

"Yes, you are right, my friend: it is to Hades that I am going."

"The five judges, the Ephori, did call you back before you died,—a grace they long denied. You should be thankful to the gods who have given you such sons as yours, and so complete a vengeance upon your enemies. When I recover, I will go to Hellas and tell your boy how his father, dying a glorious death, was borne on his shield from the battle-field to his grave."

"Do that, and give him my shield, which he must keep in remembrance of his sire. There is no need to tell him to be worthy of it."

"Shall I tell Psamtic, when we capture him, of your share in his destruction?"

"No; for he saw me before he fled, and dropped his bow in his terror. His friends took it for the signal of retreat, and turned their horses' heads."

"The gods have overthrown the villain by means of his own crimes. What wonder that he lost courage when he saw, as he thought, the spirits of the dead fighting against him?"

"He had enough to do to resist the onsets of mortals. The Persians fought well. Still, had it not been for the guards we should have been ruined."

"You are right."

"O Zeus Lacedæmonius, I thank thee!"

"Are you praying?"

"I am praising the gods for sending me to my grave without any fear for my country. These rabble hordes can never harm the land of the Hellenes. Ho! leech! how long have I to live?"

The Milesian physician, who had accompanied the troops from Asia Minor, looked for a moment at the arrow which was buried in the Spartan's breast, and said,—

"You may live a few hours longer; but as soon as the dart is taken from your breast, you die."

The Spartan thanked him, and, turning to Phanes, bade him farewell, and sent a greeting to Rhodope; then, before they could prevent him, he drew the arrow from his breast, and, a moment later, Aristomachus of Lacedæmon was dead.

On the same day a Persian embassy started in a Les-

bian ship to carry to Memphis the demand of Cambyses for the unconditional surrender of the city. The king followed it after he had detached a division under the command of Megabyzus for the purpose of capturing Sais. At Heliopolis the envoys of the Libyans and of the Greek denizens of Naucratis met him, bringing with them a golden wreath and other lordly gifts. Their petition for peace and protection he received favorably, promising them his friendship. The ambassadors from Cyrene and Barca he dismissed angrily, scattering their tribute—five hundred minæ of silver—among the soldiers with his own hand. Here, also, news reached him that the people of Memphis had rushed out in great numbers, sunk his ship, and, having torn his messengers limb from limb, had carried them into the castle. Cambyses swore that for each of his men so murdered ten citizens of Memphis should die.

Two days later he laid regular siege to the city, whose garrison was so small, and whose authorities so thoroughly cowed by the defeat at Pelusium, that its capture soon followed.

King Psamtic, accompanied by the most illustrious of his nobility, came out to meet the Persians. The ill-fated monarch, who was dressed in rags, and who wore all the signs of mourning, was received in cold silence by Cambyses, who ordered the entire party to be imprisoned. The widow of Amasis, however, was treated with much respect, and through the mediation of Phanes, to whom in former years she had been kind and gracious, was sent under a safe escort to Cyrene, where she remained until the fall of her nephew, Arcesilaus III., and the flight of her sister Pheretime. Then she went to Anthylla, an Egyptian town which belonged to her, and there lived in peaceful solitude until her death, at a ripe old age. Cambyses scorned to take vengeance on a woman for the deceit practised against him, and, as a Persian, had too much respect for a mother, especially the mother of a king, to think of injuring Ladice.

Psamtic, though kept in strict captivity in the palace of the Pharaohs at Memphis, was kindly treated during the time that Cambyses was occupied with the siege of Sais.

Among the renowned Egyptians who had incited the people to resistance, the most conspicuous was Neithotep, now imprisoned, with a hundred of his companions, in the city of the Pyramids. The greater part, however, of the Egyptian nobility voluntarily offered their allegiance to Cambyses at Sais, gave him the name Ramestu,—that is, child of the sun,—crowned him King of Upper and of Lower Egypt, and admitted him a member of the priestly caste. Cambyses, by the advice of Cræsus and Phanes, though with much unwillingness on his own part, permitted all this, and even went so far as to offer a sacrifice in the temple of Neith and take a few lessons in the sacred mysteries from the new high priest. Some of the old courtiers he retained about his person, and promoted others to high posts. The admiral of the Nile fleet, who had been appointed to his position by Amasis, had tact enough to win the new king's favor, and even succeeded in being invited to his table.

When Cambyses left the city, he named Megabyzus as its governor. Soon after his departure the suppressed hatred of the people broke out afresh. They murdered the sentries, poisoned the wells, and set fire to the stables. The general, in reporting this to his master, suggested that such outbreaks could be crushed only by severe measures. "And therefore," he said, in concluding, "order those two thousand young nobles, who have been condemned to death for the murder of your envoys, to be executed at once. It will do no harm if Psamtic's son, who will grow up to be some day a leader of rebels, were to share their fate. I am told that the daughters of the former king, and of the high-priest Neithotep, are compelled to carry water for the baths of the noble Phanes."

The Athenian smiled at these words, and said, "Cambyses has indeed, at my petition, allowed me most distinguished handmaidens."

"But has forbidden you," added the king, "to make the least attempt against the life of any member of the royal house. Only one king can punish another."

Phanes bowed, and Cambyses turned to Megabyzus and commanded him to execute the condemned criminals the next day, as a fearful warning to the seditious. In

regard to the fate of the young prince he had not yet decided, though the boy was to accompany the prisoners to the place of execution. "They must see," said the king, "that we know how to punish rebellion."

When Cræsus interceded for the innocent child, Cambyses answered, "Fear not, my old friend: he is still alive, and may yet meet no worse treatment than did thy son, who fought so valiantly at Pelusium. I should like to see, indeed, whether Psamtis will bear his fate as well as you did yours, five-and-twenty years ago."

"Let us make trial of it," said Phanes. "Order the king to go into the palace-court, and let the prisoners pass before him; then it will be seen whether he is a man or a coward."

"So be it," answered Cambyses. "I will hide myself where I can watch him unseen. Come with me, Phanes, and tell me the name and station of each as he passes."

The next morning the king and the Athenian betook themselves to a balcony overlooking the courtyard. A thick bush concealed the listeners, who could watch every gesture and hear every word of those beneath. Surrounded by a few of his companions, Psamtis stood leaning against the trunk of a palm-tree and looking gloomily upon the ground; his daughter, with the child of Neithotep, and a few other maidens, entered the court, bearing jars of water on their heads. When they saw the king, they raised a loud cry of lamentation, which woke Psamtis from his reverie. He prostrated himself in the dust as he recognized them, and then, arising, asked his eldest daughter for whom she was carrying the water. When he was told that she was doing servile work for Phanes, he turned deadly pale, and, with a quick gesture, cried to the girls, "Go."

A few minutes after, the prisoners entered, with ropes around their necks and bits in their mouths, guarded by Persian soldiers. At the head of the line walked little Necho, who, when he saw his father, stretched out his hands and prayed him to "punish these wicked men who were going to kill him." The Egyptians cried aloud in anguish; but Psamtis, with tearless eyes, only bowed

down to the earth, and with his hand signed farewell to the weeping boy.

Soon after this the prisoners of Sais appeared, among whom was the aged Neithotep, clothed in rags, and dragging himself painfully along with the help of a staff. At the gate of the courtyard he looked up, and beheld Darius, his former scholar, whom he piteously besought for help, even for a small alms. The young Persian threw down a few coins, and persuaded his comrades, who had been jeering at the old man, to do the same. The proud priest stooped and gathered up the paltry gift from the dust. When Psamtic saw this, he wept aloud, beat upon his forehead, and called to his friend by name.

Cambyses was astonished, and, pushing aside the branches behind which he stood, leaned over the railing of the balcony, and said,—

“Tell me, strange man, why you did not weep when you beheld the humiliation of your daughter and saw your son being led to death, and yet show so much sympathy for a beggar, who is no kinsman of yours.”

Psamtic looked up, and said, “The sorrow of my house, O son of Cyrus, was too great for tears; but for the misery of a friend, who has been cast down in his old age from the proudest place in the land to wretched beggary, I may weep.”

Cambyses nodded in approval, and when he turned round saw that he was not the only one moved by this piteous scene. Even the eyes of Phanes, who had been interpreter for the two kings, were filled with tears. Cambyses' heart was pleased when he saw this sign of forgiveness, and he said to the Athenian,—

“I think, my friend, our vengeance is appeased at last. Rise, Psamtic, and try, like this noble old man, once King of Lydia, to bow to your fate. Your father's trickery has been punished. The crown of which Amasis robbed the daughter of Hophra, my dead wife, I have torn from your head. For the sake of Nitetis I began this war. Now I give you back the life of your son, because she loved him. Unharméd you may henceforward live at my court, be a guest at my table and a sharer in my glory.

Go bring the boy, Gyges. He shall be educated with the young Achæmenides."

The Lydian was hastening towards the door to execute this gracious commission, when Phanes called him back, and, standing between the king and Psamtic, who was trembling with joy, said,—

"Your trouble, noble Lydian, would be in vain. Necho, son of Psamtic, is no longer among the living. Defying your command, my sovereign, I used the letter of authority you once gave me, and ordered that the grandson of Amasis should be the first to die. That blast of trumpets which you heard just now, proclaimed to all the world the death of the last of the native line of Egyptian kings. I know my doom, Cambyses, and I plead not for a life whose goal is reached. Your reproachful look, Cræsus, I understand too; but life is a tissue whose threads are sorrow and disappointment, and I, as did your monitor Solon, think those the happiest to whom, like Cleobis and Biton, the gods give an early death. If I was ever of any help or service to you, my king, grant me now but to say a few words. You know, Psamtic, what was the issue betwixt us. But ye, whose respect is all that I have left me now, hear my story.

"I was appointed, by the father of this man, commander in his place over the troops sent against Cyprus, where I achieved glory, and he but shame; I was made a confidant, without any act on my part, of a dangerous political secret; and, last of all, I thwarted a wicked attempt to carry off by force the chaste grandchild of an old friend of mine. This was the dire offence, this was the unpardonable injury, this was the reason that when I left his father's service he threatened my life. This contest is now decided. You have butchered my children, and hunted me down like a wild beast. I have robbed you of your throne, and made slaves of you and your people. I have used your daughters as my menials, and poured out the blood of your son. I have lived to see the maiden whom you lusted after, the happy wife of a young Persian hero. You, ruined, fallen wretch, saw me among the richest and most powerful of my countrymen. You, miserable man, by your abasement—and this

was the sweetest morsel of my vengeance—forced tears even to my eyes. He who, like me, dies when the cup of expiation is overflowing, is like unto the gods themselves. I have finished.”

Psamtic, with his hand pressed upon his wound, spoke not a word. Cambyses looked at him for a moment, and then took one step towards the Athenian, with his hand raised to touch the girdle of the triumphant avenger,—a gesture denoting the condemnation to death,—when his eye fell upon the chain which with his own royal hands he had hung around the neck of the Greek the day that he had proved the innocence of Nitetis. The remembrance of his wife, and of all he owed to his rebellious subject, rushed upon his mind, and his uplifted arm fell back to his side. For a moment he bent his stern gaze upon his friend, then, with a sudden impulse, pointed to the door.

Phanes bowed in silence, kissed the king's garment, and with stately, measured step descended into the courtyard. Psamtic, quivering with passion, looked after him, and then sprang towards the parapet of the balcony; but before he could utter the curse that was trembling on his lips, the unhappy king sank senseless to the ground.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE FEAST OF NEITH.

THE Nile had begun to rise again; two months, in which much had befallen, had passed since Phanes had fled from Memphis. On the day of his flight, Sappho had given birth to a daughter, and was now, thanks to the kindly care of her grandmother, so far recovered as to be able to take part, on the feast-day of Neith, in a pleasure-party that Cræsus had proposed to his friends.

The young husband and wife had left Memphis on account of the unbearable behavior of Cambyses, and

were now living in the royal palace at Sais. Rhodope, in whose house the Lydian and his son, and Bartia, Darius, and Zopyrus also, were daily visitors, accompanied her friends. And on the morning of the great festival a boat gorgeously decorated was sailing before the wind towards Memphis, about eight miles off.

Under the canopy, which was partly gilded and partly painted with all the brightest colors, the happy holiday-makers sat sheltered from the burning sun. Cræsus was sitting by the side of Rhodope, at whose feet lay Theopompus of Miletus; Darius and Syloson, the brother of Polycrates, and Sappho and Bartia, made two other groups; while Zopyrus and Gyges were busy weaving garlands of flowers for the two women. The old Lydian was telling Rhodope of the unhappy condition of the king, who, since the departure of Phanes, had given himself up to drunkenness, and who, mad with wine, was now proposing wild schemes of conquest, that Cræsus thought could only end in ruin.

"Has his mother no influence over him?" asked Rhodope.

"She could not prevent his marrying Atossa, and was even compelled to be present at the wedding."

"Poor Atossa!" murmured Sappho.

"As Queen of Persia her days are sad enough," said Cræsus; "and it is all the harder for her to be contented, that she has the same fierce pride as her brother,—who neglects her, and treats her like a child. However, in Egypt this union is not considered unnatural, for here brother and sister often marry."

"And even in Persia," observed Darius, with assumed composure, "marriages between blood-relations are considered the best."

"But to return to the king," said Cræsus: "I assure you, Rhodope, he may still be called noble;" and then he told her how Cambyses had asked at a banquet, which were the greater, himself or his father, and how he rebuked Intaphernes for his flattery when he answered that Cambyses was the greater, for he had all his father's empire, and also the conquests that he himself had made; and how the king had then asked Cræsus himself for his opinion,

and how pleased he was when the latter answered, "Thou art not so great as thy father, for thou hast no son such as he left behind him."

"Good! very good!" exclaimed Rhodope; "that answer would have done honor to Odysseus."

Then Crœsus went on to say how he had tried to dissuade the king from his projected war against the Ethiopians, the Ammonians, and the Carthaginians,—showing him that of the first nothing certain was known, and that the great sacrifice he would have to make might be rewarded with but little gain; that the people of Ammon were surrounded by an almost impenetrable desert, and were, besides, the custodians of sacred treasures, which it would be sacrilege to take; and that if any attack were made against the Carthaginians, the sailors of the royal fleet, who were, almost without exception, Phœnicians and Syrians, would refuse to make war on their fellow-countrymen; but that Cambyses laughed all this counsel to scorn, and declared his intention of showing the world that he could do something without the help of Phanes and Bartia.

"Still," said the young prince, "my brother has never been unjust to me, and is very far from grudging me my good luck; it was nothing more than that brought me exactly at the right moment to the spot where my help was needed. You know, too, that after the battle he gave me a hundred fine horses and a golden hand-mill as a reward for my valor."

These words of Bartia's set at rest the rising anxiety that Sappho was beginning to feel, and when he had finished she bent her head to receive the wreath of water-lilies that Gyges had just made for her.

When the sun had set behind the Moquattam Mountains, the slaves placed on the forward deck carved chairs and stools and tables for the party, who had now come out from beneath the awning to see the strange and beautiful spectacle which awaited them.

The festival of Neith, which the Egyptians call the "feast of lamps," and which was wont to be celebrated by a general illumination, had now begun, at the rising of the moon. The banks of the mighty river seemed like

two endless lines of light: every temple, every house, every hut, was covered with lamps. At the gates of the country-houses, and on the turrets of the larger buildings, were placed cressets, from which the burning pitch sent up bright flames and thick curling smoke; the palms and sycamores, silvered by the moonlight, were reflected in strange, distorted shapes in the ruddy waters. All the brilliant glow failed, however, to reach the middle of the stream, in which the vessel that contained our friends was making its way. It was as though they, with bright and radiant day on either side, were sailing in the night. Now and then boats, radiant with countless lamps, would flit by, like fiery swans, and when they turned towards the shore it seemed as if they were passing through a stream of molten iron. No sound from the land could be heard, for the north wind was blowing much too strongly: only the stroke of the oars and the monotonous chant of the sailors broke the stillness of this strange night without darkness.

For a long time the friends gazed in silence upon the wondrous spectacle seeming to glide by them.

At length Zopyrus spoke: "How I envy you, Bartia! If everything were as it should be, each one of us would have his own loved wife with him."

"Well, what prevented you from bringing one of yours?"

"What? why, the five other partners of my bosom," sighed the young man. "If I had brought only Parysatis, the daughter of Oroetes, my youngest darling, with me, this enchanting sight would have been my last, for to-morrow the world would have had just one pair of eyes the less."

"I am sure," returned Bartia, "that I shall always be contented with one wife."

"You spoil her terribly," said Zopyrus. "Our spouses are always quoting your kindness and indulgence when we attempt to control them; before long there will be a mutiny of women at the very gate of the palace itself, and the Achæmenides, who have escaped the swords and arrows of their enemies, will fall victims to the sharp tongues and salt tears of their wives."

"Oh, you ungallant Persian!" laughed Syloson: "we must teach you greater respect for these types of Aphrodite."

"As for that," returned Zopyrus, "we Persians treat our women as well as the Hellenes do. It is only the daughters of Egypt that have such incredible liberty."

"That is true," observed Rhodope: "the men of this strange land have, for thousands of years, granted to the weaker sex the same rights that they demanded for themselves. In some things they have given us the preference. For instance, the law of Egypt assigns to the daughters, and not to the sons, the duty of supporting their aged parents. Do not laugh at these beast-worshippers, for, though I do not understand them, I respect and admire them most thoroughly, because Pythagoras, the master of all knowledge, told me that in the doctrines of the priests there was hidden wisdom as grand and wonderful as are the Pyramids themselves."

"And your great teacher is right," exclaimed Darius. "You know that for several weeks I have been in daily intercourse with old Onuphis and with Neithotep, whose release I procured, and have been receiving their instruction. How much I have learned from these old men which I never knew or guessed! While I hearken to them I forget all the troubles of my soul. They know the whole history of the heavens and the earth, the name of every king, the exact truth of every event for four thousand years; they can tell the course of every star, and are acquainted with the works of every artist and sage of their country for ages past: all these things are recorded in the great books which are preserved at Thebes, in a palace which they call 'The Hospital of the Soul.' Their laws are a pure fount of justice, and their political arrangements are most wisely adapted to the requirements of the people. I wish we could boast in our land of a like order and regularity. The foundation of their knowledge is the use of numbers, by whose aid it is possible to calculate the path of the stars, to fix and define all existing things, and even, by the lengthening and shortening of the strings, to regulate musical tones. Number is the only certain thing, defying, as it does, all doubt,

all contradiction. Every nation has its own views of right and wrong; every law may be made, by circumstances, foolish and impracticable; but those results whose principle is number remain eternal and unchangeable. Who can dispute that two and two make four? Numbers define the contents of everything, and everything is equal to its contents,—therefore numbers are the true entities, the very being of all things.”

“Stop, in the name of Mithra, Darius, or you will make my brain reel!” exclaimed Zopyrus. “One would suppose, to hear you talk, that you had spent your life with these Egyptian hair-splitters, and had never had a sword in your hand. Of what use are numbers to me?”

“More than you think,” said Rhodope. “Pythagoras, also, is indebted for his knowledge of the wisdom of the Egyptians to this Onuphis, who has been initiating you, Darius, into their mysteries. You must come and see me soon, and I will tell you with what wonderful perfection the great Samian has brought into concord the laws of number and those of harmony. But see, yonder are the Pyramids!”

Solitary and awful, with the moonlight resting upon them, there, on the left bank of the river, stood the ancient, gigantic sepulchres of the mighty rulers of the past, telling of the greatness of man, and of its vanity. Where was the proud Cheops, who had built a mountain of stone, mortared with the blood and sweat of his subjects? Where the hoary Cephrenes, who, despising the gods, and trusting to his own strength, had barred the gates of the temples, hoping by this superhuman sepulchre to preserve his name immortal? Their empty tombs show that by the judges of the dead they were perhaps deemed unworthy of the rest of the grave and of the life beyond it; while the builder of the third and fairest pyramid, Menkera, who contented himself with a smaller sepulchre, and who opened the closed portals of the shrines, yet lay undisturbed in his blue basalt tomb. There, rising high above the barren rocks of the Libyan hills, stood the Pyramids, in the silent night, illumined by the stars and watched over by the guardians of the desert, the great Sphinxes. In lordly tombs, at their feet, slept the bodies

of those loved and trusted by the builders of these Pyramids; and opposite the monument of Menkera the Good, rose the temple where the priests of Osiris offered up prayers for the souls of those who were resting in the great burial-place of Memphis.

In the west, where a little while before the sun had set behind the mountains, where the fertile land ended and the waste began, the men of Memphis had built their last abiding-places, and towards the west the joyous party now looked in silent awe as they sailed swiftly past the "city of the silent." When they had left this behind them, and the huge levees too, which protected from the floods of the Nile the town that Menes, the first of the Egyptian kings, had founded, and as the dwelling of the ancient Pharaohs came nearer, and the innumerable lights kindled in honor of the goddess began to shine out, the solemn influence passed away, and loud and eager were their expressions of wonder and admiration as they approached the temple of Ptah, the oldest building in the oldest of lands.

Thousands of lamps lit up the house of the god; a hundred fires flashed from the pylons, the battlements, and the roofs. Between the rows of sphinxes, which connected the different gates with the main building, gleamed countless torches; and the empty shrine of the holy Apis, encircled with motley flames, shone out like a chalk-cliff on which lies the glow of a tropical sunset. Over it waved banners and fluttering pennons, and long garlands of flowers were trailed in lovely profusion all about it, while song and music streamed out thence into the night.

"Oh, beautiful! most beautiful!" exclaimed Rhodope. "See how the many-colored walls and pillars gleam, and what strange figures the shadows of the obelisks and sphinxes make on the smooth yellow pavement of the courts!"

"And how dark and mysterious," added Cræsus, "looks the sacred grove of the goddess! Such a scene is wonderful."

"I have seen something yet more wonderful," said Darius. "You will believe it when I tell you that I

was a witness of the celebration of the mysteries of Neith."

"Tell us, tell us about it," exclaimed all.

"Neithotep refused at first to admit me, but when I promised that I would keep myself from all observation and procure, besides, the release of his child, he led me up into his observatory, which commanded a view on every side, and then told me that I should see a representation of the fate of Osiris and his spouse Isis. Scarcely had he left me when strange, many-colored flames so lit up the grove that I could look into its innermost recesses. Before me lay a lake shining like a mirror, and bordered by fair trees and beautiful beds of flowers. On its surface swam golden boats, in which were boys and girls clad in white, and singing sweet songs. No pilot guided the tiny craft, which still flitted about in every direction with a hundred turns and windings. In the midst of the others floated a large and beautiful vessel, its bulwarks glistening with jewels. Its only helmsman was a beautiful boy, and yet, most strange, the rudder in his hand was but a white lotos-blossom, whose tender petals scarce touched the water. In the midst of the ship there lay, on silken cushions and dressed in royal array, a woman fairer than the day; beside her sat a gigantic man, wearing on his thick, waving hair a lofty diadem covered with ivy-leaves, and over his shoulders a panther's skin, and holding a curved staff in his right hand. In the stern, under a canopy of roses, ivy, and lotos-flowers, stood a snow-white cow with golden horns, on whose back was spread a scarlet covering. The man was Osiris; the woman, Isis; the boy at the helm, Horus, their child; and the cow, the sacred animal of the immortal woman. Songs of joy burst forth, the smaller boats glided forward and soon approached the ship of the gods, who threw fruits and flowers upon the fair, young singers.

"Suddenly there was heard the sound of thunder, which grew louder and more frightful, as a repulsive-looking man, covered with the skin of a bear, his red hair hanging in ragged disorder around his hideous face, rushed out from the gloom of the sacred grove, and, plunging into the

lake, followed by seventy creatures like himself, made his way towards the vessel of Osiris. The little boats fled like the wind, and the lotos-blossom fell from the trembling hand of the boyish helmsman. The horrid monster threw himself upon Osiris, and with the aid of his fellows quickly overcame him. The corpse he cast into a mummy-chest, and this into the lake, which bore away, as if by magic, the floating coffin.

"In the mean while, Isis, in one of the small boats, had reached the land in safety, and now, followed by her virgins, who, like her, had just disembarked, ran, with dishevelled hair and loud lamentations, around the border of the lake, all searching for the body of the slain Osiris, yet busy all the while with strange, affecting songs and dances. The youths were engaged, while dancing and sounding their rattles, in preparing a coffin for the lost god. When it was ready, they joined the company of the mourning Isis, and with her went round the edge of the lake, singing sorrowful songs.

"Suddenly, a gentle voice from some invisible source announced to the wailing chorus that the body of the god had been carried by the current of the Mediterranean to Gebal in distant Phœnicia. This song, which the son of Neithotep, who stood beside me, called 'The Wind of Fame,' made a great impression upon me. Scarcely had Isis heard this happy news when she threw off her mourning garments, and, with the youths and virgins as a chorus, sang a song of joy. Fame had not lied, for the goddess, in very truth, found near the northern shore of the lake the sarcophagus and the body of her spouse. As soon as they were brought, amidst singing and dances, to land, Isis threw herself on the body, called Osiris by name, and covered the mummy with a thousand kisses, while the youths were making a curious sepulchre of branches of ivy and lotos-flowers.

"After the sarcophagus had been placed within it, Isis went in search of her son. She found him at the eastern end of the lake, where I had noticed for some time a wonderfully beautiful youth practising martial exercises with his companions. This was Horus, a child no more. While the mother was rejoicing over her fair

son, a second clap of thunder announced the approach of Typhon. The monster hastened to the blooming grave of his victim, tore the sarcophagus from it, and, rending the mummy into fourteen pieces, scattered them, amid the sounds of drums and trumpets, along the shore. When Isis returned she found only withered flowers and an empty tomb; but on the bank of the lake there were burning at fourteen different places fourteen fires in strange colors. She hastened with her virgins towards these lights, while the youths joined Horus, and, led by him, attacked Typhon on the other side of the lake. I knew not which way to look; for on one hand, amid the sound of the thunder and the blare of trumpets, raged a fierce battle which held my attention captive, and on the other hand, sweet women's voices were singing ravishing songs, to which the virgins were moving in strange dances, for Isis had found at each of the fires one of the parts of her husband's body, and was celebrating a joyful feast.

"If you could but have seen those dances, Zopyrus! I can find no words to describe the graceful movements of the maidens, nor make you understand how beautiful it was when they crowded together at one minute in confused disorder, then suddenly formed two long regular lines, standing face to face, only to fall into graceful confusion again from which fresh order was evoked. Dazzling light flashed from the rows of dancers, for each of them bore on her shoulders a looking-glass, which sent forth bright gleams when the wearer moved, and which when she stood still reflected her partner's image.

"Isis had just found the last portion of the body of Osiris, when from across the lake came the sound of songs and trumpets. Horus had defeated Typhon, whom, in order to free Osiris, he compelled to enter the portals of the lower world, which, guarded by a ferocious monster, stood open on the west bank of the lake. Nearer and yet nearer sounded the exquisite music of harps and flutes; heavenly incense arose, a rosy light spread through the grove, and, holding the hand of his victorious son, Osiris came through the open portal of the lower world. Isis hastened to the arms of her husband thus rescued from the grave, and gave Horus another beautiful lotos-blossom,

which he was to use instead of his sword. She scattered flowers and fruits all around, while Osiris seated himself under a canopy covered with ivy, there to receive the homage of the spirits of the Amenti and of the earth."

After a momentary silence, Rhodope said, "We thank you much for your graphic account of the mysteries, and would thank you still more if you would tell us their hidden meaning, for such they certainly must have."

"You have guessed rightly enough," returned Darius, "but concerning that I must be silent, for I gave my promise to Neithotep not to reveal the secret."

"Shall I tell you," asked Rhodope, "what inference I draw from the lessons which Pythagoras and Onuphis gave me as to the meaning of the sacred drama? Isis, as I think, is the kind earth; Osiris, moisture, or the Nile, which makes her fruitful; Horus, the young spring; Typhon, the dryness withering all things. The latter destroys Osiris, or the moisture; the earth, robbed of the power to bring forth, seeks, sorrowing, her loved spouse, whom she finds again in the cooler north, whither the Nile has poured itself; finally, Horus, the productive power of nature, has grown up, and conquers Typhon, or the dryness. Osiris was, like the fertility, only seemingly dead, and now arises from the lower world, and with his spouse, the generous earth, rules over the happy valley of the Nile."

"As the conquered god behaved with so much propriety in the world below," said Zopyrus, laughing, "he received, in that last chapter of this marvellous tale, the homage of all the dwellers in Hamestegan, Duzakh, and Gorohtman, or whatever you call the mansions of the defunct Egyptians."

"They are called Amenti," said Darius, in the same tone; "for the story of the god and goddess symbolizes not only the life of nature but also the soul of man, which, when the body, like the slain Osiris, dies, never ceases to exist."

"Thank you kindly," returned Zopyrus. "I will comfort my soul with this in case I should die in Egypt. On the next occasion I will be present at this mystery, cost what it may."

"I share your wish," said Rhodope; "old age makes us inquisitive."

"You are ever young," said Darius. "Your eyes are——"

"Pardon me if I interrupt you," said Rhodope; "but the word 'eyes' reminds me of the oculist Nebenchari,—and my memory is growing so uncertain that I must ask you about him now, or I shall certainly forget it. I never hear anything now of the great physician to whom Cassandane owes so much."

"Poor wretch!" exclaimed Darius. "In the expedition to Pelusium, he avoided intercourse with any one, and even refused to speak to his fellow-countryman Onuphis. His withered old servant was the only person he would suffer to be near him. After the battle, however, his whole being seemed to change. With a beaming face he entered the king's presence to request permission to accompany the latter to Sais, and also to have the privilege of choosing two of the citizens of the place to be his slaves. Cambyses felt that he could not refuse anything to the man who had done so much for Cassandane, and therefore gave him the necessary authority. When the physician had arrived at the home of Amasis, he hastened at once into the temple of Neith and commanded the arrest of the high-priest, who had headed the faction hostile to the Persians, and also of an eye-doctor named Petammon. He told them that, as a punishment for the burning of his manuscripts, they were to serve, as slaves, in a foreign land, a certain Persian, to whom he would sell them. I was a witness of this scene, and actually trembled at the sight of the Egyptian when he made this declaration to his enemies. Neithotep listened calmly, and, when Nebenchari had finished, answered, 'If, oh misguided son, thou hast betrayed thy country for the sake of thy destroyed manuscripts, thou hast acted not only wickedly, but foolishly. I preserved thy very valuable works with the utmost care. By my orders they were deposited in our temple, and a full and exact copy was sent to the library at Thebes. We burned nothing but the letter from Amasis to thy father, and an old worthless chest. Psamtic and

Petammon had charge of the fire, and resolved on the spot, in gratitude for thy manuscripts, and as a compensation for those papers which, to save Egypt, we were unfortunately compelled to destroy, that a sepulchre to thy honor should be built in the great cemetery. On its walls thou wilt find, painted in beautiful colors, the figures of those divinities to whose service thou hast consecrated thyself; also the most holy chapters of the books of the dead, together with many pictures concerning thyself.' The physician grew deadly pale, but said not a word. They showed him first his books, and then his new and splendid tomb. To his two slaves he gave their liberty, though they were still obliged to go to Memphis with the other captives; and then, staggering like a drunken man, and with his hands clasped over his forehead, he departed to his own house. There he wrote his will, in which he left all his possessions to the grandchild of his old servant Hib, and then, feigning illness, he lay down upon his bed. The next day he was found there dead. He had poisoned himself with the deadly juice of the strychnos."

"Unhappy man!" exclaimed Cræsus. "Punished by judicial blindness as betrayer of his country, instead of vengeance he found despair!"

"Yet I pity him," said Rhodope. "But see, the rowers are pulling in their oars. We have reached our destination, and yonder are your carriages and litters. Farewell now; I hope to see you soon at Naucratis. I return at once with Syloson and Theopompus. Give little Parmys a hundred kisses for me, and tell Melitta that she must never take the child out into the open air during the mid-day heat, on account of its eyes. Good-night, Cræsus; good-night, my friends, one and all. Farewell, my son!"

The Persians, waving good-by, descended from the ship. Bartia turned round once again as he reached the shore, and, making a misstep, fell to the ground. Zopyrus hastened to help him up, but he was already on his feet again.

"Take care, Bartia," said his friend. "It is a bad sign for one to fall when he is stepping ashore. The same thing happened to me when we disembarked at Naucratis."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE BOW OF THE ETHIOPIAN KING.

IN the mean time the ambassador Prexaspes had returned from the mission to the long-lived Ethiopians. He was loud in his praises of the great size and strength of these people; he described the journey to them as being utterly impracticable for a large army, and gave most wonderful accounts of them. They were accustomed, he said, to make the strongest and handsomest man among them their king, and to obey him without any compulsion. Many of them lived to be a hundred and twenty years old, and not a few were even more aged. Their food was cooked meat, and their drink fresh milk. They washed in a fountain, the water of which smelt like violets, was so light that wood sank in it, and gave the skin a peculiar glossiness. Their captives wore golden fetters, as brass was very rare and costly. The bodies of their dead they covered with gypsum, over which they poured a substance resembling glass; and these pillars, as it were, they placed for a year in their houses, where they offered sacrifices for the dead, and at the end of that time they set them in long rows around the city.

The king of this strange people received with sneers the presents which Cambyses sent him, and said that he knew very well that the Persians cared naught for his friendship, and that Prexaspes had only come to spy out the land; that if the great king of Asia were honest and wise he would be satisfied with his immense empire, and not try to enslave a nation which had never injured him. "Take this bow to thy master," he added, "and advise him not to take the field against us till the Persians learn to wield these weapons as easily as we. Cambyses may also thank the gods that the Ethiopians have not as yet taken a fancy to foreign conquests." Having sent the bow once, he gave it to Prexaspes to deliver to the Persian monarch.

Cambyses laughed at the boastful African, invited all the nobles to be present at a trial of the bow, the next morning, and rewarded Prexaspes for his hard journey and the skilful manner in which he had discharged his commission. Then, intoxicated, as usual, he lay down and fell into a restless sleep. He dreamed that Bartia was sitting on the throne of Persia, and touching the very heavens with his head. This vision, for whose interpretation he called no Mobeds or Chaldeans, moved him first to rage and then to anxious reflection.

"Have I not," he said to himself, "given my brother cause for hatred? Can he be expected to forget that I cast him, guiltless, into prison, and doomed him to death? Will not the Achæmenides side with him if he rebels against me? What have I ever done to win the favor of these hireling courtiers? What can I do? Since Nitetis died, and that wonderful Hellene fled away, is there a single one upon whose fidelity I am able to rely?"

Springing from his couch, he exclaimed aloud, "I am still king, and, by the gods, will show this young favorite of fortune which of us is the stronger. Let him, if he can, touch the heavens with his head; one, only one, can be great in Persia, he or I,—he or I. In a day or two I will send him back to Asia and make him Satrap of Bactria. Let him listen there to his wife's songs, and play the guardian to his children, while I win endless glory in battle against the Ethiopians. Here, varlets, bring me my garments and a strong morning draught. I will show the Persians that I am the equal of yonder boastful king, and can surpass them all in wielding that weapon. Another bumper! I will bend the bow, were it a cypress-tree, and its string a ship's cable."

Emptying another cup of wine, he betook himself, in full confidence of success, to the palace-garden, where the nobles of his empire were awaiting him. Between the close-cropped hedges and long straight walks, poles, connected by scarlet ropes, had been hastily put up; from them there fluttered, on gold and silver rings, hangings of red and yellow and dark blue. A number of benches of gilded wood stood around in a wide circle, and busy waiters were bringing wine in costly vessels to the as-

sembled company. The king's face brightened as his eyes ran along the ranks of the Achæmenides and noted the absence of his brother. Prexaspes then gave Cambyses the bow, and showed him a target set up at some distance. The latter laughed at its size, and, taking the bow, weighed it in his hands, and, calling upon his friends to make the essay first, he offered the weapon to Prexaspes, as the most illustrious of the Achæmenides.

While the father of Darius, and, after him, the heads of the other six illustrious houses of Persia, were trying, in vain, to bend the huge bow, the king emptied goblet after goblet of wine, and with the failure of each of the nobles his spirits rose. At last Darius, himself the most renowned archer of the empire, made his trial, but, straining every muscle, succeeded in drawing the bow only a finger's width.

Cambyses, delighted at the young man's failure, gave him a friendly nod, and, turning to the bystanders, with a confident air exclaimed, "Give me the bow, Darius. I will show you that there is but one in Persia who deserves the name of 'king,'—but one worthy to war with the Ethiopians,—but one who can bend this bow." Then, seizing the weapon, he grasped the bow of ebony-wood with his left hand, and the cord of lion's-gut, a finger thick, with his right, drew a deep breath, bent his sinewy back, and pulled and pulled, gathering up all his strength for the terrible effort, and straining his muscles till they almost parted and the veins in his forehead seemed about to burst; but all in vain. After a quarter of an hour of superhuman exertion, his strength failed him, and the bow—although he had bent it more even than Darius had—flew back, and mocked all further attempts.

At last, utterly exhausted, he threw the bow to the ground in a rage, exclaiming, "The Ethiopian lies. No mortal ever drew that bow. What my arm cannot do none can do. In three days we start for Ethiopia; there I will challenge this braggart to single combat, and show you which of the two is the better man. Pick up the bow, Prexaspes, and take good care of it, for I will have that black liar throttled with its cord. This wood, I tell you, is harder than iron. Him who can bend it

I will agree to call master: he must be of mightier stuff than I."

Scarcely had he finished speaking when Bartia entered the garden, splendidly arrayed, his face beaming with happiness and conscious strength. Nodding kindly, he made his way through the rows of the Achæmenides, who greeted the handsome youth with admiring applause, and, going up to his brother, kissed his raiment, and said, as he looked calmly into the king's ill-boding countenance,—

"I am somewhat late, and must ask forgiveness, my lord and brother. Yet perhaps I am still in time. Oh, yes; I see there is no arrow in the target yonder,—the best archer in the world has not tried his strength yet. You look as if you would like to know what detained me. Well, I confess, it was my child who made me forget how time was flying. She has pulled the star from my chain, you see. I think, my brother, you will do me new honor if I send an arrow through the centre of the mark. Shall I begin, or will you, my king?"

"Give him the bow, Prexaspes," said Cambyses, not deigning his brother a look.

When Bartia had taken the weapon, and was carefully proving the bow and cord, the king said, with a sneering laugh, "By Mithra, I believe that you are trying to win over this bow, with your sweet looks, as you do men's hearts. Give it back to Prexaspes. It is easier to play with pretty women and children than with a weapon which defies the strength of true men."

Bartia flushed with indignation at these scornful words, and, taking in his right hand an immense arrow that lay on the ground before him, he placed himself opposite the target, and, exerting all his strength, drew the bow and drove the arrow deep into the centre of the mark, while the wooden shaft broke into a dozen pieces.

Most of the Achæmenides burst into uproarious applause; but the prince's more intimate friends turned pale, and, without speaking, looked first at the king, who was trembling with rage, and then at Bartia, radiant with pride and exultation. The expression of Cambyses' face was terrible to look upon. It was as if that arrow had

pierced his very heart, and smitten his pride, his strength, his honor. His eyes flashed with rage, and in his ears sounded the roar as of a mighty tempest; with an iron grasp he seized the arm of Prexaspes, who stood beside him. The envoy knew the meaning of that fierce grasp, and murmured, half audibly, "Poor Bartia!"

The despot seemed at length to gain control of himself. Throwing a golden chain to his brother, and summoning the nobles to follow, he left the garden. When in his own apartment again, he strode up and down in restless disquietude, stopping every little while to empty the wine-cups that his attendants offered him. Suddenly he appeared to have made up his mind, and, bidding all the courtiers, saving only Prexaspes, leave the room, he exclaimed, in a voice hoarse with drink and passion,—

"This thing can be endured no longer! Get rid of mine enemy, and I will call you my dearest friend."

Prexaspes, affrighted, threw himself at his master's feet and raised his hands for mercy; but Cambyses, maddened by hatred and wine, misunderstood the action. He thought that the ambassador wished in this way to show his acquiescence, and, motioning to the prostrate man to rise, he whispered, as though he feared the sound of his own words,—

"Do the deed quickly and stealthily. No one save us two, if you care for your life, must know how this spoiled pet of fortune came to his end. Go, and, when it is done, take from my treasury whatever you please. Look to yourself, though; the boy has a strong arm and a cunning tongue. If he tempts you with smooth persuasions, remember your wife and children, they shall pay for your disobedience with their lives." And, muttering curses upon his unhappy brother, he staggered out of the room.

Long after he had gone, Prexaspes stood in the same spot motionless and horrified. The ambitious yet not evil-hearted courtier was aghast at the bloody task assigned him. He knew that, to him and his, death or disgrace would be the result of disobedience; yet he loved Bartia, and his whole nature revolted at this bravo's work.

A terrible struggle within his own heart still rent him even when he had left the palace far behind. On his way home he encountered Cræsus and Darius; and he hid himself behind the projecting door of an Egyptian house, for he fancied that they must read murder in his face. As they passed, he heard Cræsus say,—

“I chid the young prince severely for his ill-timed display of strength; and we may thank the gods that, in a fit of fury, Cambyses did not kill him at once. Bartia has gone, by my advice, to Sais with his wife. The king must not see him for a few days, lest Cambyses' wrath be again aroused; a ruler can always find unscrupulous villains ready to his hand.”

Prexaspes gave a guilty start at these words; it was as if Cræsus had denounced him to his face. He resolved, come what might, that he would not defile his hands with the blood of his friend; and, with an upright bearing, he walked quickly to his house.

At the door his two boys, just returned from the playground of the young nobles, ran to meet him. With strange emotion he embraced and kissed them when they said they must go back if they did not wish to be punished. Within he found his wife, with her youngest child, a lovely little girl. That strange feeling came over him again, and, lest he should betray his guilty secret, he went hastily to his own room.

Night had just fallen. In feverish unrest the sorely-tried man tossed on his couch; the thought that his refusal to fulfil the king's behest would deliver over to death his wife and his children stood out in terrible distinctness before his sleepless eyes; the strength to keep his vow seemed to leave him, and even the words of Cræsus, which had given the victory to his better feelings, now turned against them. “A ruler can always find unscrupulous villains ready to his hand.” Though this sentence pronounced his own dishonor, yet he argued: Supposing that he did defy the king, would not Cambyses find a hundred others ready to do his will? Scarcely had this subtle sophistry flashed before him when he sprang from the bed, and, trying each of the many daggers that hung carefully arranged beneath it, picked out the sharpest of

them and laid it on the table that stood close by. He then walked thoughtfully up and down the room, looking, every now and then, out of the window in restless longing for the dawn.

As at last the day broke and the gong calling the boys to morning prayer sounded in his ears, he tried the dagger a second time. When the gorgeously-dressed courtiers, in a long procession, passed on their way to the king, he thrust it into his girdle; and when, last of all, he heard the merry laugh of his child come from the women's room, he put his tiara upon his head, and, without bidding his wife farewell, hurried to the Nile with his slaves behind him, and, entering a boat, bade the rowers take him forthwith to Sais.

Thither Bartia, following the advice of Cræsus, had gone with his wife a few hours after the eventful trial of the bow. He found Rhodope there; instead of returning to Naucratis, she had betaken herself, urged by an uncontrollable impulse, to the capital of Amasis. After the pleasure-party Bartia had fallen down as he set his foot on land, and she had herself seen that an owl had flown over him on the left side. Whether these evil omens had sufficed or not to disquiet her soul, not altogether above the superstition of the time, and make her wish to be near her grandchild, at any rate she hastily resolved, upon awaking from a restless sleep disturbed by painful dreams, to go at once to Sais.

The young husband and wife were both delighted and surprised to see her, and, after she had petted her little Parnys to her heart's content, they took her to the rooms that always stood ready for her. They were those in which the unhappy Tachot had passed the last few months of her life. Rhodope, very much touched, examined all the articles in the chamber, which told not only the age and sex of the late occupant, but even of her tastes and disposition. On the toilette-table there were several boxes of ointment, and vials filled with perfume, paint, and different kinds of oil. In a casket, which was in the shape of a Nile goose, and in another, on which was painted a woman playing on the lute, had been placed the costly ornaments of the young princess. The looking-

glass, whose handle represented a sleeping maiden, had often reflected the fair, delicate features of the daughter of Amasis. The whole furniture of the room, from the bed, resting on lions' claws, to the exquisitely-carved ivory combs lying on the toilette-table, showed that the royal maiden had been a devoted lover of dress. The golden sistrum and the finely-wrought naba, whose strings had long been broken, told of her passion for music; while the shattered ivory distaff and some half-finished nets of beads showed that she had been fond of feminine employments.

Rhodope looked long and carefully at all these things, and wrought in her fancy a picture of the young girl's life that was very near the truth. Seeing a large painted chest, she raised its light cover, and in it found some dried flowers, and a ball, which had been carefully wrapped in leaves and roses long since withered; on this lay a number of amulets of various shapes,—one representing the goddess of truth, another being a golden box which contained a scrap of papyrus covered with magical words. Her eyes fell upon some letters written in Greek; she took them, and, by the dim light of her lamp, read them through. They were letters which Nitetis had sent to her supposed sister, of whose illness she had as yet not heard.

As Rhodope put them down, her eyes were filled with tears; the secret of her who was gone now lay open before her. She knew Tachot loved Bartia, that from him the princess had received those faded flowers, and that she had covered that ball with roses because he had thrown it to her. The amulets she had placed there, either that they might give peace to her own sad heart, or that they might awaken love in that of the young prince.

When Rhodope, for the purpose of putting the letters back in their place, was lifting some cloths which seemed to fill the bottom of the box, she noticed that they covered some hard, round object; and, raising them, discovered a bust made of painted wax, which was so wonderfully like Nitetis that she could not refrain from an exclamation of astonishment, and for a long time sat in silent contemplation of the work of the great artist of Samos. At

last she lay down, and, thinking over the tragical fate of the Egyptian king's daughter, fell asleep.

The next morning they all met again in the palace-garden, and Bartia told Rhodope of the trial of the bow. She urged him most strongly to leave Egypt as soon as possible, and warned him that every moment he was near his brother was one of most imminent danger.

The prince listened with his eyes bent upon the ground. When she had finished, he raised them again, and beheld Prexaspes, pale and haggard, standing before him. After the customary salutations, the envoy said to the young man, in a low voice, that he wished to speak with him in private. When they were alone, he said, playing nervously with the rings on his fingers,—

“The king sends me to you; you have made him very angry by your feat yesterday. He will not look upon your face for some time to come, and therefore commands you to go to Arabia, to buy there as many camels as you can procure. They are to carry water and provisions for the expedition to Ethiopia. Our journey allows of no delay: therefore take farewell of your wife and child, and be ready, for such is the king's order, to start before night. You will be away at least a month; I myself will accompany you as far as Pelusium. Cassandane wishes to have your wife and child with her in the mean time. Send them, therefore, as soon as possible, to Memphis.”

Bartia listened, but without noticing the abrupt and embarrassed manner of Prexaspes. He was rejoiced at what he thought the moderation of the king; and this commission removed all doubt as to the question of leaving Egypt or not. Giving his hand to his supposed friend to kiss, he invited him to come with him into the palace.

When the cool air of evening began to be felt, he said good-by to Sappho and to his little girl, who lay in Melitta's arms, enjoined his wife to go at once to Cassandane, and, saying jestingly to Rhodope that for once in her life she had been mistaken in her opinion of a man, sprang upon his horse. As Prexaspes was about to mount, Sappho whispered to the envoy,—

“You will take care of him, and not fail to remind him

of Parmys and me whenever he is disposed to run unnecessary risks?"

"I shall have to leave him at Pelusium," answered the envoy, busying himself with his horse's bridle, that he might not meet the eye of the young wife.

"May the gods guard him!" she exclaimed, as she took her husband's hand once more in hers. Bartia looked down, and, seized by a strange foreboding, he lifted her up and kissed her and the child so passionately, that it seemed as though he were taking leave of them forever. Then, putting spurs to his horse, so that the beast reared wildly, and followed by Prexaspes, he dashed through the gate of the palace of the Pharaohs.

CHAPTER XXXI.

RETRIBUTION.

ON the morning which followed the trial of the bow, Cambyses was seized by an attack of his old malady, and for eight-and-forty hours was so ill in body and mind that he could not leave his room,—now sinking into lethargy, and now raging like a maniac. When, on the third day, he regained his consciousness, he thought at once of the terrible commission which Prexaspes must by this time have executed. He trembled, as he never had done before, at the bare possibility of it, and sent at once for the envoy's eldest son, who acted as one of the royal cupbearers, and heard from him that his father, without taking leave of any one, had left Memphis.

Then the king summoned Darius, Zopyrus, and Gyges, whom he knew to be Bartia's dearest friends, and asked them how it fared with the prince. Upon learning that the latter was at Sais, he despatched the young men with an order to send Prexaspes, if they should meet him, at once to Memphis. They could not comprehend the strange conduct of Cambyses, nor his eager haste; but, fearing evil, started forthwith on their journey.

In the mean time the king could find no rest, and, inwardly cursing his drunkenness, touched no wine all that day. When he encountered his mother in the garden of the palace, he avoided her, as though he dared not look her in the face.

Eight days, which seemed to him like a year, passed, without tidings of Prexaspes. A hundred times he sent for the young cupbearer to ask if his father had returned, and each time received the same answer, that he had not. On the thirteenth day, as the sun was just sinking, Cassandane sent to ask him to visit her. He went at once, for he longed to see his mother's face; it seemed to him as if it might give him back his sleep. When he had greeted the royal widow with an approach to tenderness that all the more surprised her as she was little used to receive such demonstrations from him, he asked what was the object of her summons, and was told that Bartia's wife had come hither under somewhat strange circumstances, and had expressed a wish to offer the king a gift. Sending for her without delay, he learned that Prexaspes had brought her husband an order to go at once to Arabia, and to her an injunction from Cassandane to return to Memphis.

The king turned pale at this revelation, and looked at his brother's lovely wife with a troubled, pained expression. Sappho felt that something more than ordinary was occupying the king's thoughts, and, tortured with anxious forebodings, she could only hold out the gift towards him in her trembling hands.

"My husband sends you this," she said, pointing to a carved box which held the image of Nitetis. Rhodope had advised her to bring it, in Bartia's name, as a gift of reconciliation.

Cambyses handed the box, whose contents seemed to excite his curiosity very little, to a eunuch, addressed to his sister-in-law a few words which were intended for thanks, and, without even asking for Atossa, whose existence he appeared to have forgotten, left the women's house. He had thought this visit would do him good and appease his anxiety, but Sappho's story had robbed him of his last hope, and with it his only chance of peace

and rest. Prexaspes must already have done the murderous deed, or, if not already, he might that very moment be raising his dagger to bury it in the young man's breast. How could he ever meet his mother again after Bartia's death? How could he answer her questions, and those of that lovely young creature who had looked so anxiously and touchingly at him with her large, beautiful eyes?

A tremor seized him as a voice within cried out that his brother's murder would be denounced by all as unjust, unnatural, cowardly. The thought of being an assassin almost drove him mad. Without a twinge of compunction he had put many a man to death, but that had been always either in honorable combat, or at least in sight of all the world. He was king, in sooth, and what he did was good. If he had struck down Bartia with his own hand, he might have justified the act to himself; but to put him out of the way secretly,—oh, shame! shame!

Now shivering with cold, and now hot with fever, he lay down on his bed. While he was being undressed, his thoughts reverted to his brother's present, which he ordered to be brought to him. When the box was opened he dismissed the servants, and, as his eye fell on the Egyptian paintings which covered it, he could not help thinking of Nitetis, and what she would have said of this last act of his. Feverish, and almost delirious, he bent over the chest, took from it that fair head moulded in wax, and stared with a look of stupefaction into the cold, motionless eyes of the image. The likeness was so wonderful, and his own judgment so weakened by illness and intoxication, that he thought himself the victim of some magical illusion; he could not take his eyes from the bust. Suddenly it seemed to him that the eyes moved, and, seized by a sudden horror, hurled the image against the wall, and, as it fell into a hundred fragments on the floor, he sank back with a groan upon the bed.

In his dreams he imagined he saw the exiled Phanes, who sang a merry Greek song, and mocked him so that he clinched his fist with rage; then he saw Crœsus, his friend and adviser, who threatened him, and repeated the same words which he had spoken to him when he had

previously been about to execute Bartia: "Shed not thy brother's blood, for know that the smoke of it will rise to heaven, and as a thick cloud make dark the murderer's days, till at length from it shall fall the thunderbolt of vengeance." And in his delirium the picture was made reality. He thought that a bloody rain streamed down from black clouds above, and that his face and hands were wet with the horrid drops. When it had ceased, and as he went to the Nile to purify himself, Nitetis came towards him with the sweet smile that Theodorus had copied so wonderfully. He threw himself at her feet and seized her hand. Scarcely had he touched it when on the end of each of her fingers was a drop of blood, and she turned from him in horror and disgust. He prayed to the vision for forgiveness, and entreated her to turn towards him, but she would not; then he grew furious, and threatened her with his anger and with frightful punishments; at last, as Nitetis only answered him with low, mocking laughter, he hurled his dagger at her, which broke into a hundred pieces, as the waxen image had done, and the mocking laughter grew louder and louder. Many voices joined in it, each striving to outdo the others in jeers and scorn. Bartia's voice, with that of Nitetis, rose above all the rest, and seemed to him to be the bitterest. At last, unable to endure this longer, he closed his ears with his fingers, and yet still heard it all; in his desperation, he buried his head now in the burning sand, now in the icy waters of the Nile, till at length he lost all consciousness.

When he awoke, all seemed strange to him; he had gone to bed in the evening, and now, instead of its growing day, night was certainly falling; he could not be mistaken, he heard the priests singing their farewell to the departing Mithra. Then he heard several persons moving behind a curtain that had been hung at the head of his bed. He tried to turn around, but could not.

At last, after in vain endeavoring to separate the dream from the reality, he called for his servants, who were accustomed to be at his bedside when he rose, that they might dress him. They came, and with them his mother, Prexaspes, several Magi, and some Egyptians whom he

did not know. He learned then that he had been ill for several weeks with a fever, and only by the grace of the gods, the skill of the physicians, and the unwearied care of his mother, had been rescued from death.

Four days later he was strong enough to sit up in an arm-chair, and to be able to ask Prexaspes about the subject which alone filled his mind. The envoy, seeing his master's condition, tried to avoid the topic; but the latter lifted his emaciated hand threateningly, and the expression of his eyes warned Prexaspes to obey. Thinking to give great pleasure to his lord, the eager official exclaimed,—

“Rejoice, my sovereign; the youth who sought to eclipse your glory is no more: this hand struck him down, and buried the corpse near Baal-Zephon. No one knows of it, save us two, and the sea-gulls and cormorants which fly over his grave.”

A scream of rage burst from the king, who, a prey to new delirium, relapsed into his fever. And there passed long weeks, in which every moment threatened to be his last.

At length his iron frame conquered in the strife with death; but his mind, shaken by the illness, never recovered. A strange monomania seized him now: he imagined that Bartia was not dead, but was changed into the bow of the Ethiopian king, and that the *feruer*, or spirit, of his dead father, commanded him, by the conquest of the black people, to restore his brother to his proper shape. This delusion, which he confided to every one as a great secret, pursued him day and night, and gave him no rest till he started with a great army for Ethiopia; but, with his design unaccomplished, he had to turn back, after the greater part of the army had perished in the desert through thirst and famine. A writer, almost contemporary, tells us that the wretched soldiers, after their provisions had failed, lived on herbs and roots, and that when these could no longer be found they had recourse to a means of subsistence which makes the flesh creep to tell of. Every ten soldiers cast lots, and ate the man who drew the horrible prize. At length, driven to desperation, they forced the madman to return,

only to obey him as blindly as ever, when they reached Egypt again in safety.

As he entered Memphis with the fragments of his army, the people, in holiday dress, were celebrating a feast in honor of the newly-discovered Apis. As Cambyses, while yet at Thebes, had been informed that his expedition against the Oasis of Ammon had perished miserably in a "chamsin," or sand-storm, in the desert, and that the fleet he had sent against Carthage had revolted, he imagined that the people of Memphis were holding their festival on account of his defeats: he sent, therefore, for the most eminent citizens, denounced their conduct, and asked them why it was that they were so sullen and gloomy after his victory, and so inordinately merry when he had suffered reverses. They told him the reason of their rejoicing, and assured him that the appearance of the divine animal was always hailed in Egypt with feasting and processions. Cambyses, however, called them liars, and as such condemned them to death.

He sent for the priests, and received from them the same reply. He said, mockingly, that he wished to make the acquaintance of the new god, and ordered it to be brought before him. They led the beast into his presence, and told him that it was brought forth by a virgin cow, who, being touched by a moonbeam, conceived it; that it must be black, with a white triangle on its forehead, and on its side a crescent; on the tail they looked for two kinds of hair, and on its tongue an excrescence in the shape of the holy insect *Scarabæus*.

When the sacred animal stood before him, and he was unable to find anything extraordinary in its appearance, Cambyses flew into a rage, and thrust his sword into its side. When he saw the blood stream, and the Apis fall down, he burst into a loud laugh, and said,—

"Fools! your gods, it seems, have flesh and blood, and can be wounded. Such nonsense is worthy of you. But you shall see that I am not to be made sport of. Here, guards, scourge these priests, and kill every one you discover engaged in this crazy celebration."

His orders were obeyed, and the ill feeling of the Egyptians was excited to the highest pitch.

After the Apis had fallen dead, the people of Memphis conveyed it to the vaults of the holy animals in the Serapeum, and, under the leadership of Psamtic, attempted a revolt against the Persians; but it was quickly suppressed, however, and cost the unhappy son of Amasis a life, whose crimes, when we remember that it was spent in unresting efforts to save his country from the foreign foe and lost in a last struggle for liberty, we should forget, if we cannot forgive.

The king's irritability increased daily, and his faithful counsellor, Cræsus, never left his side, though Cambyses often ordered him to be executed. The officers knew their master, and never laid a hand on the old man. The next day the king would recall the order, if he had not forgotten all about it, so that they were in no danger of punishment. Once, however, the unhappy whip-bearers atoned for their disobedience with their lives, although Cambyses was greatly rejoiced that Cræsus was unharmed.

We gladly pass over many of the cruel acts of the fierce lunatic, and will mention but one or two. One day at the banquet he asked Prexaspes what the Persians said about himself. The envoy, who sought to appease his tormenting conscience by perilous and noble deeds, lost no opportunity of doing good to his unhappy master, and therefore answered that the people praised him in every respect, but thought that he was too much addicted to wine. At these words, spoken in a half-jesting manner, the king started to his feet in a rage, exclaiming, "They say, then, that wine robs me of my wits? I will show them that they know not how to judge." He bent his bow, took aim for a moment, and sent an arrow through the breast of the eldest son of Prexaspes, who, as a cup-bearer, was awaiting the orders of the king in the farther end of the hall. Cambyses commanded the body of the boy to be cut open. The arrow had pierced to the very heart. The crazy tyrant was delighted, and said, laughing, "You see, Prexaspes, that not I, but the Persians have lost their wits. Who could have hit the mark better?" Prexaspes gazed pale and motionless upon the horrid spectacle. But his slave's-soul bowed before the omnipotence

of the king, and his hand never sought for his dagger. He even murmured, when the lunatic repeated his question, "A god could not have shot more surely."

A few weeks later, the king betook himself to Sais. When he was shown the apartments of his former wife, the long-forgotten memory of her seemed to awake into new life, and his confused recollection told him that Amasis had in some way deceived them both. Without being able to recall clearly the particular circumstances, he cursed the dead man, and rushed in furious haste to the temple where the royal mummy rested. He tore the corpse from its sarcophagus, ordered it to be beaten with rods, stuck with needles, the hair to be pulled out, in a word, to be abused in every possible way, and finally—in violation of the religious laws of the Persians, who hold the defiling of the pure fire by a dead body to be a mortal sin—to be burnt. To the same fate he condemned the mummy of the first wife of Amasis, which was at Thebes, her home.

When he returned to Memphis, he did not hesitate to maltreat, with his own hand, his spouse and sister, Atossa. One day he had ordered games and combats to be held. Among the rest, there was a fight between a young lion and a dog. When the lion had conquered his adversary, another dog, the brother of the vanquished, broke loose from his chain and attacked the lion, whom, with the help of the wounded dog, he overcame. This sight, which pleased the king immensely, made Cassandane and Atossa, who were present by Cambyses' command, to weep aloud. The astonished despot asked the cause of their tears, and received as an answer from Atossa that the courageous beast who risked his life for his brother reminded her of Bartia, who, unavenged, had been murdered by one she would not name. These words so excited the king's wrath, and the slumbering pangs of his conscience, that he struck his audacious wife with his fist, and would probably have killed her, had not Cassandane placed herself between them and exposed her own body to his blows. The saintly face and voice of his mother were able to appease his rage, but her look, which fell full upon him, told of such indignation and such utter contempt

that he could not forget it, and a new mania seized him, that he was being blasted by women's eyes. Whenever he saw one of the other sex, he would hide himself in terror behind his companions, and finally ordered all the feminine inmates of the palace, his mother not excepted, to be taken to Ecbatana. To Araspes and Gyges was intrusted the duty of conducting them back to Persia.

The caravan of the royal ladies had arrived at Sais. Cassandane and Atossa were much altered in the last few years: the latter was fairer than ever; the mischievous girl was now a dignified woman. The last three years had taught her patience, though they had failed to make her forget her first love. And Sappho's friendship compensated her, to some degree, for the loss of Darius.

The young Greek girl had changed beyond recognition since her husband's death. Very lovely, in spite of her paleness, she looked like a mourning Ariadne. She would start at every unexpected sound, and whenever especially she heard a man's voice at a distance; for hope, though subdued, still lived in her heart. Three years she passed at Sais, in which she saw little of her grandmother, and seldom left the house, and then never without Cassandane or the eunuchs, for such was the king's command. Had it not been for the child, she never would have gone abroad at all.

Cassandane, who had wished to see Rhodope, sent for her one day; and in the course of their interview the latter asked the queen-mother to give her back her grandchild. But Cassandane showed how utterly impossible it was, since Sappho, and especially Parmys, as members of the royal family, must remain with the rest; and then, in her turn, she asked Rhodope to go back to Persia with them. But the old Grecian woman shook her head. No, in Egypt she must stay to the last, to serve her fellow-countrymen. Though the widow of Cyrus scarcely understood the feeling of her friend, yet she felt it was useless to combat it, and if nothing else came of their meeting, it certainly promoted much love and respect on each side.

That same day Rhodope received the news that

Phanes, after having lived in study and contemplation at Crotona, at no great distance from his friend Pythagoras, had died a few months previously, from the wound received at Pelusium. Rhodope was very much affected by this intelligence, and said to Cræsus,—

“In Phanes Greece loses one of the noblest of her children, but there are many such as he still left. Therefore I, like him, fear naught from the aggressive power of Persia. I even believe that my country, with its many heads, when fierce ambition attempts to lay its hand upon her, will become a giant with one head of godlike power, to which, as always, mere brute force will have to bow.”

Three days later, Sappho took her last farewell of her grandmother, and followed the royal ladies to Persia, where, still believing, in spite of all that had happened, in the possibility of Bartia's return, and full of love and hope and faithful remembrance, she lived in entire devotion to her daughter and the aged Cassandane.

The little Parmys grew up in rare loveliness, and learned, next after the gods, to love nothing so dearly as the memory of her lost father, whom, from the many things her mother had told her, she knew almost as well as if she had seen him. Atossa, for all the happiness that soon fell to her own lot, never forgot their old friendship, and always called the young widow “Sister.” In summer, Sappho lived in the hanging-gardens at Babylon, and often heard from Cassandane and Atossa the story of that gentle being who was the guiltless cause of events affecting so deeply the fate of great men and mighty kingdoms,—Nitetis, the daughter of the Egyptian King.

CHAPTER XXXII.

DARIUS, SON OF HYSTASPES, THE KING.

HERE we might end our story, if we did not think that the reader would like to hear of the final destiny of several of the principal characters of this narrative.

A short time after the departure of the royal ladies, there came to Naucratis the intelligence that Oroetes, the satrap of Lydia, had, under false pretences, enticed his old enemy, Polycrates, to Sardis, and had there caused him to be crucified: so that the tragic end which Amasis had predicted to the tyrant had come to pass. The satrap had done this act without the king's permission, as many changes, threatening to overthrow the dynasty of the Achæmenides, had taken place in the Median empire. The long sojourn of Cambyses in a distant land had destroyed, or at least weakened, the awe which formerly his mere name was wont to exercise upon those disposed to rebellion. The knowledge of his insanity had taken from him the respect of his subjects, while the information that, out of mere wantonness, he had given over thousands of their countrymen to a certain death in the Ethiopian and the Libyan deserts, had excited an intense hate in the breasts of the discontented Asiatics,—a hate which, being fostered industriously by the powerful Magi, stimulated first the Medes and Assyrians, and then even the Persians themselves, to open insurrection.

Cambyses' viceroy, the ambitious high-priest Oropastes, prompted by self-interest, placed himself at the head of the movement, flattering the people by the cessation of their taxes, by munificent gifts, and by the promise of still greater privileges. When he saw how much popularity he had acquired in this way, he even attempted, by an audacious deception, to gain the Persian crown. The trick was all the easier of accomplishment from the fact

that just in proportion to the hate felt towards the crazy king was the popular love for young Bartia.

When, finally, numberless messengers from Oropastes had been sent to every province of the empire, and had taken to the discontented citizens the news that the younger son of Cyrus was still alive, notwithstanding the rumors to the contrary which had been put in circulation, that he had revolted against his brother, had mounted the throne, and had granted to all the subjects of the realm three years' exemption from military duties and from all taxes, the new ruler was hailed with acclamation throughout the whole kingdom.

The false Bartia submitted to his brother Oropastes, to whose mental superiority he yielded complete allegiance, took possession of the palace of Nysea in the plain of Media, had himself crowned king, declared the royal harem to be his own henceforward, and, that the people might recognize in his features those of the murdered prince, showed himself to them from a distance. Then, fearing to be unmasked, he concealed himself in the palace, and, after the custom of Asiatic rulers, devoted his life to luxury and voluptuous pleasures, while his brother with a firm hand wielded the sceptre, and gave all the honors and offices to his own friends and colleagues the Magi.

When the high-priest felt the ground firm under his feet, he sent the eunuch Ixabates to Egypt to tell the army of the change of rule, and to persuade them to desert from Cambyses and join the party of Bartia, who, as we know, was almost adored by the soldiers. The judiciously-chosen envoy fulfilled his duty with tact and cleverness, and had already won over a large part of the army to the new king, when he was seized by some Syrians, who looked for a reward, and brought to Memphis. When he reached the city of the Pyramids he was led at once to the king, who assured him of entire forgiveness if he would tell all the truth. The messenger then confirmed the information, which hitherto had reached Egypt merely as a rumor, to the effect that Bartia had ascended the throne of Cyrus, and was acknowledged as king by a greater part of the empire.

Cambyses started in terror at this news; it was as if he had seen one rise from the dead. In spite of his darkened mind, he knew well that Bartia, at his command, had been murdered by Prexaspes. Then he suspected that the latter had deceived him and had spared the young man's life. Uttering this thought at once, he bitterly reproached Prexaspes with his treachery, and made him swear a solemn oath that he had slain and buried, with his own hands, the unhappy prince. Then the messenger of Oropastes was asked if he himself had seen the new king. He answered no, and added that the pretended brother of the king had appeared in public but once. Now Prexaspes saw through the whole lying schemes of the high-priest, reminded the king of the wretched misunderstanding which the resemblance between Gaumata and Bartia had caused before, and offered to wager his life that this guess was right.

The insane king had now but one thought,—that of wreaking his vengeance on the rebellious Magi. The army received orders to prepare themselves for the march. Aryandes, one of the Achæmenides, was appointed satrap of Egypt, and the great expedition began its return to Persia. Driven to frenzy by his new mania, Cambyses took no rest, and turned night into day, till upon one occasion his horse, awkwardly handled by its savage master, threw the king, who in the fall was severely wounded by his dagger. After lying for several days without consciousness, he at last opened his eyes, and called for Araspes and then for Cassandane and Atossa, whom he had sent home several months before.

From his talk, it was evident that the last four years, from his attack of fever to the late accident, had passed from his recollection, as though he had been sleeping all that time. Whatever occurrences during this period were alluded to seemed to be perfectly new to him and to pain him very much. Of his brother's death alone he had a clear knowledge; he remembered that at his command Prexaspes had murdered Bartia, and that the envoy had reported that he had buried the young prince with his own hands near the Red Sea.

The night after this awaking from unconsciousness,

the king began to understand that he had been insane for a long time. Towards morning he fell into a deep sleep, which gave him so much strength that he summoned Cræsus to his bedside, and demanded of him a complete account of all that had passed during the last four years. The gray-haired councillor obeyed his king's command, and told all. Cambyses was deeply repentant, and asked the old man to pray all those who had been injured, especially Cassandane, Sappho, and Atossa, to forgive him. Cræsus tried to suggest some hope and comfort, and told him that he might make amends in the future for his sins of the past; but the king shook his head, and asked the old man to have him carried out into the open air and to order the Achæmenides to be summoned.

When, in spite of the remonstrances of the doctors, the royal command had been obeyed, Cambyses, bidding his servants raise him up, said, in a clear, ringing voice, "The time has come, O Persians, when I must reveal my greatest secret. Deceived by a dream and irritated and offended by my brother, in my wrath I ordered him to be murdered. Prexaspes, at my behest, did the bloody deed, which, instead of giving me peace, has brought upon me madness and now this death of agony. My confession ought to convince you that my brother Bartia is no more among the living. The Magi have seized the throne of the Achæmenides for themselves. At their head stand my viceroy Oropastes and his brother Gaumata, who so much resembles the real Bartia that Cræsus, Intaphernes, and my uncle, the noble Hystaspes, once mistook him for your prince who is dead.

"Woe is me that I have murdered him who, as nearest to me in blood, would have avenged the shame done me by those juggling priests! Him I cannot call back from the dead; therefore it is for you to execute my last commands. You, then, I adjure, by the soul of my great father and in the name of all pure and holy spirits, never to suffer the empire and the rule to fall into the hands of the lying Magi. If by cunning they have snatched the crown, do you by cunning win it back. If they by force have seized the sceptre, do you by force wrest it from their grasp. If you obey this my last behest,

then will the earth bring forth her fruits, and your wives and your herds be blest, and freedom be a heritage to you and to your children, as long as the world shall last. But if you regain not, or strive not to regain, the mastery, then evil shall be your lot, and all of you, ay, every Persian, shall die as I am dying now."

When the sons of Jemshid saw the king fall back, after these words, weeping and powerless, they rent their garments, and raised the loud cry of lamentation.

A little later, and Cambyses had breathed his last in the arms of Cræsus. The one to whom all his thoughts turned in these his dying hours was his betrothed, the daughter of the Egyptian king, and her name was the last on his dying lips. Beside the body of his king knelt the grand old Lydian, and, as he watched in that chamber of death, he said within himself, "O Cyrus the mighty, I have kept mine oath, and to thy unhappy son I have been faithful even unto the end."

On the following day the old man, with his son Gyges, set out for Barene, a city which belonged to him, and there lived many years as the father of his people, held in high honor by Darius and respected by all the men of his time.

After the death of Cambyses, the chiefs of the seven noble houses of Persia took counsel together, and resolved that their first effort must be to ascertain with certainty the identity of the usurper. Otanes, therefore, sent a trusty eunuch with a secret message to his daughter Phædime, who, as they knew, must, with the rest of the royal seraglio, which had been left at Nysea, have passed into the possession of the new king. Before the messenger returned, the greater part of the imperial army had deserted, the soldiers gladly availing themselves of this opportunity to return, after their long separation, to their families and friends.

At length the long-expected eunuch came back, and brought Otanes a message to the effect that Phædime had only once been visited by the new king, but that she had taken advantage of his sleep to convince herself, at a great risk, that his ears were in truth gone. Even without this discovery, however, she could assert that the

usurper, whose likeness to the murdered prince was indeed remarkable, was no other than Gaumata, brother of Oropastes. Her old friend Boges was again chief of the eunuchs, and had confided to her this secret of the Magi. The high-priest had come upon the eunuch as a beggar in the streets of Susa, and had greeted him with the words, "That you have forfeited your life is true enough, but I have need of people of your stamp!" In conclusion, Phædime begged her father to do his utmost to overthrow the Magus, who treated her with great contempt. She was, she asserted, the most unhappy of women.

Although none of the Achæmenides had believed for a moment that Bartia was alive or had seized the throne, yet they were very glad to receive such certain proof as to the identity of the usurper, and resolved to go at once with the remains of the army to Nysea, and either by force or fraud overthrow the Magi. After they had arrived, without encountering any obstacle, at the new capital, and had seen that the greater part of the people were content enough under the priestly rule, they pretended to believe that the reigning king was indeed the younger son of Cyrus, and professed their readiness to do him homage. The Magi, however, who were not in the least deceived by this, shut themselves in their palace, collected in the plain of Nysea an army, to which they promised high pay, and used every effort to confirm the general belief in the identity of Gaumata with the real Bartia. In this matter, no one could be of greater service or greater injury to them than Prexaspes, for he stood high in the respect of all the Persians, and could, by the assurance that he had never killed Bartia, put an end to the rumor which was rapidly spreading concerning the death of the prince. Oropastes sent, therefore, for the ambassador, who, since the dying address of the king, had been avoided by all his companions, and who had led the life of one utterly despised, and promised him a large sum if he would ascend a certain tower and say to the people, who would be assembled in the courtyard below, that liars had accused him of being Bartia's murderer, whereas he had just seen, with his own eyes,

the new king, and had recognized in him Cambyses' brother.

Prexaspes acceded to this without any resistance, took farewell of his wife and children, while the people were gathering together in the palace-yard, said a short prayer to the gods at the altar of the holy fire, and with a stately step walked to the palace. On his way thither, he met the seven great nobles, and said to them, as he saw them avoid him, "I have deserved your scorn, but I am about to try to earn your forgiveness."

When Darius turned towards him, the envoy seized the young noble's hand, and said, "I have always loved you as a son. Take care of my children when I am gone. And now spread your pinions, winged Darius." Then with a proud bearing he mounted the lofty tower. Many thousands of the people of Nysea heard him as he said, in a loud, clear voice,—

"You all know that those kings who have covered you with glory and honor have belonged to the house of the Achæmenides. Cyrus governed you like a loving father, Cambyses like a strong master, and Bartia would have ruled you as gently as does a bridegroom his bride, had he not been slain on the shores of the Red Sea by this hand, which I hold up in your sight. The murderous deed, which I performed, I swear by Mithra, with a bleeding heart, was done in that obedience which every loyal servant owes his master. Yet I could find no rest, by day or by night; like a hunted beast I have been pursued by the spirits of darkness, who drive sleep from the murderer's pillow. For four long years I have been thus tormented, and now, therefore, I have resolved to end this life of remorse and despair by a noble act; and if I find no mercy at the bridge Chinvat, in the mouths of men, at least, I will win back the honorable name that I have lost. Know, then, that the man who pretends to be the son of Cyrus, sent me to this tower, and promised me a rich reward if I would lie to you and tell you that he was a child of Achæmenes. But I laugh at his promises, and I swear here, the holiest oath I know, by Mithra and by the souls of the kings, that he who rules you now is none other than the ear-cropped Magus Gau-

mata, brother of Oropastes, whom you know. If you will forget the glory which you owe to the children of Jemshid, if you will add ingratitude to your abasement, then acknowledge these wretches and call them kings. But if you scorn false-dealing and shame to bow down to lying tricksters, then drive out these Magi before Mithra leaves the sky, and call to the throne the noblest of the Achæmenides, the second Cyrus, Darius, son of Hystaspes. That you may believe my words, and not suspect that this Darius has sent me here to win you to his side, I will now perform an act which will end every doubt and show you all that to me the honor of the Achæmenides is dearer than life. Look! See how I die!"

With these words, he cast himself headlong from the battlements, and thus, by a heroic death, expiated the only crime of his life. The people, who had listened breathlessly, broke out into loud cries of rage and vengeance, burst open the palace-gates, and, with the words, "Death to the Magi!" were trying to force an entrance into the interior, when the seven great nobles placed themselves in the way of the furious populace. When the citizens saw them they applauded, and exclaimed, "Down with the Magi! Victory to King Darius!" Then the son of Hystaspes, borne on by the crowd, ascended a high position, and told them that the chief Magi, as liars and usurpers, had been killed by the Achæmenides. Fresh bursts of applause greeted his speech. Finally, when they had been shown the bleeding heads of Oropastes and Gaumata, the furious crowd rushed through the streets, killing every Magus they could find. Only nightfall put an end to the frightful butchery.

Four days afterwards, the son of Hystaspes, on account of his birth and abilities, was chosen king by the other six nobles, and joyfully acknowledged by all the Persians. Darius had killed the Magus Gaumata with his own hand, and Megabyzus had slain the high-priest. While Prexaspes was speaking to the people, the seven conspiring princes, Otanes, Intaphernes, Gobryas, Megabyzus, Aspatines, Hydarnes, and Darius, who represented his aged father Hystaspes, had entered

the palace by a negligently-guarded gate, had soon ascertained where the Magi were, and made their way thither, as they knew the arrangement of the palace, and as nearly all the guards were occupied in keeping watch over the people listening to Prexaspes. A few eunuchs, headed by our old friend Boges, attempted to stop their progress, but, after a futile resistance, were struck down to the last man by the conspirators. Boges was killed by Darius, who recognized him, and showed small mercy. The Magi, startled by the shrieks of the slaughtered eunuchs, hurried to the spot, and endeavored to make a defence. Oropastes seized a spear from the hand of the falling Boges, put out the eye of Intaphernes, and wounded Aspatines in the leg, but was at last stabbed by Megabyzus. Gaumata ran into a room close by, and tried to bolt the door; but Darius and Gobryas rushed in before he could close it. The latter seized the Magus, threw him to the ground, and by lying on top of him held him fast. Darius stood hesitatingly, in the dimly-lighted chamber, near the two combatants, for he feared to strike, lest he should hurt Gobryas; but the latter seeing this, said, "Strike, if you transfix us both!" Darius raised his dagger, and, luckily, it was the Magus who received the fatal blow. Thus perished Oropastes, the high-priest, and Gaumata, who is better known as "the False Smerdis."

A few weeks after the election of Darius, which the people said was confirmed by miraculous signs, the son of Hystaspes celebrated at Pasargadæ a magnificent coronation-feast, and a yet more splendid wedding with his beloved Atossa, the daughter of Cyrus, who remained through his long, eventful life his faithful wife and helpmeet.

Darius, as Prexaspes had predicted, was a sovereign whose deeds and works won for him the name of Great, and deservedly was he called a second Cyrus. Brave and sagacious as a general, he arranged and governed this boundless empire so well, that he is justly ranked among the greatest administrative rulers of all history. To him alone his feeble successors owed their ability to sustain the huge Asiatic Colossus. Generous with his

own and frugal of his subjects' treasures, he was able to make kingly gifts without requiring undue exactions. Instead of the arbitrary levies of Cyrus and Cambyses, he introduced a regular system of taxation, which he carried out notwithstanding all the obstacles he had to encounter,—among the rest, the jeers of the Achæmenides, who, on account of this scheme of finance, so incomprehensible to their military understandings, dubbed him "the Trader."

It was not the least of his merits that he founded in his own empire, and therefore in half the civilized world, a uniform system of coined money. Respecting the customs and religion of every people, he allowed the Jews, after the decree of Cyrus had been discovered in the archives of Ecbatana, to continue the building of the temple of Jehovah. He granted to the Ionian cities an independent democratic government; and he would scarcely have sent an army against Greece if he had not been grossly insulted by the Athenians.

The art of carrying out a wise political economy he had learned, with many other things, from the Egyptians. To this nation, therefore, he always paid the greatest respect, showed it much kindness; as, for instance, by connecting the Nile with the Red Sea by a canal, that so the commercial interests of the land of the Pharaohs might be promoted. During his whole reign he constantly endeavored to compensate by his benefits for the harshness that Cambyses had exercised upon the Egyptians; and even in his later years the literary treasures of that wise people were his never-ceasing delight, and their manners and religion he would permit no one to laugh at. The aged high-priest Neithotep enjoyed till his death the favor of the king, his pupil; and his astronomical knowledge was often called into requisition by Darius.

The Egyptians acknowledged the kindness of their new ruler, and called him, as they had their ancient kings, a divinity; but towards the end of his reign, yielding to their desire for independence, they forgot the gratitude they owed him, and sought to shake off the easy yoke which galled because it had been laid on them against

their will. But their noble king and protector was not destined to see the end of this struggle. It was reserved for Xerxes, the successor and son of Darius and Atossa, to bring them back to a forced, and therefore grudging, submission.

Darius left, as a fitting memorial of his greatness, a lordly palace on the mountain Rachmed near Persepolis; its ruins are to this day the wonder and admiration of travellers. Six thousand Egyptian builders, who had been carried to Asia under Cambyzes, assisted at the undertaking, and helped those workmen also who were engaged in making a royal sepulchre for Darius and his descendants, whose almost inaccessible chambers in the rock have survived the ravages of time and are sheltering-places now for countless wild doves. Upon a wall of the smoothly-polished rock of Bisitun, or Behistan, not far from the place where Darius had saved Atossa's life, he caused the history of his deed to be chiselled in cuneiform characters, and in the Persian, Median, and Assyrian languages.

The portion in the Persian tongue can yet be deciphered with certainty. It contains an account of his life, which agrees very well with that given by Herodotus and that set forth in our last few chapters. Among the rest is the following: "It is Darius, the king, who speaks. Those deeds which I have done, even all things, came to pass by the favor of Auramazda. After the kings had rebelled, I fought nineteen battles. By the grace of Auramazda I conquered. I took nine kings prisoners. One was Gaumata, a Mede; he lied, therefore, when he said, 'I am Bardeya (Bartia), the son of Cyrus.' He made the Persians to rebel." He also tells the names of the heads of the noble families who helped to overthrow the Magi. And in another place is the following: "It is Darius, the king, who speaks. That which I have done, I have done always by the grace of Auramazda. Auramazda brought me help. It was for this that Auramazda brought me help, because I was no quarreller, no liar, no oppressor, neither I nor my children. Him who helped my fellows, to him have I shown favor. Him who was mine enemy have I chastised. Thou, who mayest be a king

hereafter, to the man who is a liar or a rebel be thou not merciful, but punish thou him with a great punishment. It is Darius, the king, who speaks. Thou who hereafter readest these tables, these which I have written, or these pictures, destroy them not, but preserve them as long as thou livest," etc.

It only remains for us to tell that Zopyrus, the son of Megabyzus, was till his death the faithful friend of Darius. When a courtier once showed the king a pomegranate, and asked him, "What piece of good fortune would you wish to possess as many times over as this pomegranate has seeds?" Darius answered at once, "My Zopyrus!"

The son of Megabyzus knew how to requite the kindness of his royal friend; for when the latter had for nine months vainly beleaguered the city of Babylon, which revolted from the Persian empire after the death of Cambyses, he came into the presence of the king, who was about to raise the siege, covered with blood and with his ears and nose cut off, and told him that this mutilation he had done himself that he might play a trick upon the Babylonians, who were acquainted with him, as in former days he had often made love to their daughters. He proposed to inform these rebellious citizens that Darius had thus put him to shame, and that he had come to them to ask for help in wreaking his vengeance. They would give him troops, with which, to win the confidence of his employers, he intended to make several successful sorties; finally he would gain possession of the keys of the gates, and with them he would open the portals of the city of Semiramis to his friends. These words, spoken in a jesting tone, and the wretched appearance of his once handsome friend, touched the king deeply, and, when he had by means of the cunning of Zopyrus actually overcome the almost impregnable fortress, he exclaimed, "I would give a hundred Babylons if my Zopyrus had not done himself this hurt." Then he appointed his friend ruler of the great city, bestowed upon him all its revenues, and honored him yearly with rare gifts. Afterwards he was wont to say that, except Cyrus, with whom no man was to be compared, never had any one done a nobler deed than that of Zopyrus.

When Syloson, the brother of the murdered Polycrates, once came to Susa, and reminded the king of the services he had done him, Darius received the Samian as his friend, placed many ships and soldiers at his disposal, and helped him to regain the crown of Samos. The islanders defended themselves desperately against the foreign troops, and said, when they were finally compelled to surrender, "Syloson's conquests have made room enough on our island."

Rhodope lived to see the assassination of the tyrant Hipparchus, the despot of Athens, by Harmodius and Aristogiton, and, with as firm faith as of old in the great destiny of the Hellenes, she died at last in the arms of her friends Theopompus of Miletus, and Callias of Athens. All Naucratis mourned for her, and Callias sent a messenger to Susa to tell the king and Sappho of her death.

A few months later the Satrap of Egypt received the following decree, written by the hand of Darius:

"As we have known and ever honored Rhodope of Greece, lately deceased at Naucratis; and as the granddaughter of the said Rhodope, being widow of the legitimate heir of the throne of Persia, still enjoys the honors of a queen; and as we have lately taken Parmys, the great-grandchild of the deceased, and daughter of Bartia and Sappho, to be our third proper spouse: therefore it seemeth good to us that to the remains of the ancestor of two lofty princesses royal honors should be given. And we command thee by this writing that thou bury with regal splendor the ashes of Rhodope, whom we have esteemed the greatest and most wonderful of all women, in the greatest and most wonderful of all monuments, that is, in one of the Pyramids. In the accompanying urn, which Sappho sends, let the ashes of the dead be preserved.

"Given in the new Imperial Palace at Susa.

"DARIUS, SON OF HYSTASPES,
"The King."

THE END.

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